

About the Author

Barbara Meiklejohn-Free, the Highland Seer, is considered the UK's best-loved "wise woman" and revered elder of the Old Ways. Barbara has been working with spirit since the age of twelve. She is a heredity, eclectic, and solitary witch, having been initiated into the craft at sixteen, and is now a High Priestess of Isis and of the Cailleach. Drawing on her extensive work with indigenous cultures from around the world, she weaves a deep understanding and wisdom of the ancient landscape of her own Pagan heritage. She is a recognised expert in assisting people to explore lost arts of "initiations" as well as hosting rites, rituals, and ceremonies reflected in her bestselling and award-winning books and oracle cards. Barbara uses mediumship, psychic abilities, shamanic healing, rebirthing, soul retrieval, past life regression, and rites of passage, combining them all together in her readings and raising them to new levels of awareness in order to help people become aware of who they are and why they are here.

Barbara also leads people on guided site visits to Egypt, South America, the USA, Hawaii, and many other places to meet the native people of these lands, to gain an understanding firsthand of the way they live close to and listen to the teachings of Mother Nature. She worked at the Arthur Findlay College at Stansted as a course organiser and workshop leader and taught at the College of Psychic Studies in London. Her shop in Buxton—Arnemetia's, which she runs with Flavia Kate Peters—sells all the tools of the craft and wonderful clothing from around the world. She also facilitates private consultations at her shop.

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A Complete Guide to Authentic Folklore, Spells, and Magickal Tools

Barbara Meiklejohn-Free The Highland Seer

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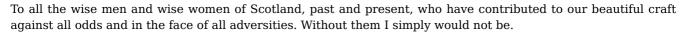
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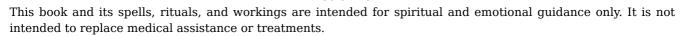
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Dedication



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Foreword

hy does Scottish witchcraft matter? Historically there are three big reasons. One is that Scotland was one of the worst places in the whole of Europe for witch-hunts, clocking up a total of something between fifteen hundred and three thousand executions between 1563 and 1736. By comparison, England, which had five times the population, probably put to death less than five hundred people as witches in the same period. Two factors account for the difference. One was that the Scots had a much more extreme Protestant Reformation, which swept away bishops, cathedrals, and festivals like Christmas and Easter as well as all the other features of medieval Catholicism. As part of this zeal, they developed a more ardent fear of Satan, whose servants they deemed witches to be. The other factor was a difference in legal systems. In England a person accused of witchcraft was tried by a pair of professional judges, and the verdict was decided by a jury drawn from a wide area and probably not known at all to the accused. Evidence was therefore rigorously scrutinised, and an English person had an average 75 percent chance of being acquitted of the charge.

In Scotland, a suspected witch was arrested by the local gentry and clergy, who would force her or (more rarely) him to make a confession that was then sent to the central government. The latter then usually sent back permission to try to execute the person concerned, which permitted virtually no chance of escape.

The second reason why Scottish witchcraft matters is that it has had a great influence on Western views of witches in general, simply because Scottish writers took an interest in the history of witchcraft much earlier than those in England. In particular, two Scots in the early nineteenth century—the poet and novelist Sir Walter Scott and the legal historian Robert Pitcairn—published works on it which largely defined British knowledge of witch trials until the late twentieth century. For example, the word "coven," to mean a group of witches, actually appears historically in only the trials of two women at Auldearn, a village east of Inverness on the Moray Firth, in 1662. One of those trials, however, happened to be of Isobel Gowdie, who left the longest, most detailed, and most lurid confession by an alleged witch in British history, telling of her adventures with the devil, the queen and king of the fairies, and her "coven," a word which seems to have been coined by her and her companion from the contemporary term "conventicle," meaning an illicit religious meeting. Pitcairn published the confession, and it became so famous that the word was accepted across the English-speaking world.

The third reason why Scottish witchcraft matters is provided if the concept of "witchcraft" is broadened out to cover all forms of magick, including healing and divination. During the nineteenth century, as folklore-collecting became a major activity of European scholars, some of the most exciting folklore found in Britain came from the Gaelic populations of the Highlands and Hebrides, especially with respect to second sight and the use of blessings and charms. Many devoted and able collectors worked on this project, and they helped to foster—with some justification—the contemporary view of Celtic peoples as especially attuned to magick and a terrestrial Otherworld. The two most influential were the most creative and least scrupulous in scholarly terms. One was a Glaswegian, William Sharp, who wrote under the guise of a Hebridean woman, Fiona Macleod, and worked up medieval Irish stories and real Scottish mythology into polished literary works that won a huge audience. The other was a genuine Gael, Alexander Carmichael, who amassed a large amount of charms and stories from the Western Isles and combined different versions of them into final texts glossed with his considerable poetic gifts to create luminously beautiful products, published as *Carmina Gadelica*, which owed as much to his own talent as local culture.

By comparison, Scotland has not been in the driving seat of the modern Pagan revival in Britain, most of the main traditions of which have originated in England or Wales. It has, on the other hand, played a distinguished supporting role: for example, two of the leading Gardnerian Wiccans in the 1960s, Monique and "Scotty" Wilson, were initiated and first set up their own group in Scotland; and more recently the Scottish branch of the Pagan Federation has been a pioneer of interfaith work and other measures to establish Paganism as a legitimate complex of religions in the eyes of wider society. This is why it is especially welcome to see this new book from Barbara Meiklejohn-Free, best known hitherto as one member of the musical group the Daughters of Gaia, latterly a duo with Flavia Kate Peters, who has similarly become a prominent author. Barbara is an authentic product of the Highland edge, growing up not far from where Isobel Gowdie lived and trained by a local wise man who would seem to step straight from the nineteenth-century collections. While rooted in a particular view of history and heritage, her tradition has a strong practical quality accessible to anybody wishing to engage with the land, the spirit world, and magick. It should help to carry Scottish witchcraft into a further fruitful relationship with the world in this new millennium.

—Professor Ronald Hutton, Head of History at the University of Bristol, Fellow of the Royal Society and the Society of Antiquaries, Commissioner of English Heritage

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Introduction

magine standing on top of a Scottish mountain ten thousand years ago, looking down as the first people walked on these ancient lands. They came from distant shores and felt the call of the spirits of the kingdom of "Alba." These ancestors who walked upon Caledonia gave birth to the peoples known as the Picts, Britons, Celts, Vikings, and Anglo-Saxons. They were the ones who seeded a magickal lore that took place upon these mystical lands and weaved a tapestry of storytelling, folklore, herbal craft, faery lore, and more that would be passed down in oral traditions and would stand the test of time. All of them had beliefs and spiritual practices that were not written down, and only fragments of their wisdom survive today. Written records by followers of Columba indicate that the druids lived and worked with the kings and queens of Scotland and travelled around ancient sites such as Iona and Callanish on the Isle of Lewis. They shared their wisdom of healing, herbalism, storytelling, and divination with the people and created a foundation for future descendants, who would practice this knowledge that included rituals, reincarnation, fire festivals, astrology, and working with the moon and sun.

My name is Barbara Meiklejohn-Free. I am a witch and I walk the path of the Old Ways. My ancient soul hears the call of the Highlands, through the lochs and the glens, as her misty cloak surrounds me with the spirits of the land I was born upon. The ancestors walk with me as I call out and reclaim all my magickal powers that were taken from me throughout the ages. Reborn, I walk on the earth listening to my greatest teachers who surround me. I truly believe that the wisdom we share and practice, known as Scottish witchcraft, comes from those who walked on our lands, leaving clues along the pathways, glens, lochs, and faery hills for those of us who have an eye to see and an ear to hear. This is my story of how the ancient ones, the Cailleach, all the ancestors, and spirits of the lands of the Highlands, came to me and showed me how to become a witch, a wise woman of the land of my birth. They brought me to the great Swein MacDonald, the Highland Seer, who guided and showed me how to use my gifts of second sight, healing, and magickal work to weave together this most wonderful craft, what I commonly refer to now as "wisecraft."

What Scottish witchcraft has shown me is life's great diversity. Instead of just focusing on what other people have written, it is advisable to pay greater attention on your path and to make it your own way. Scottish witchcraft is the most natural form of working with the spirits and ancestors of the land and is of course shamanic in its very nature. There are no manmade rules or regulations in Scottish witchcraft, apart from abiding to the one law: "Do as you will, but harm none." There is no insistence on having altars laden with show tools; a wise woman or man can choose their sacred tools or the tools choose them. There is no right or wrong way because we are guided by an unseen force that moves through us. Our tools of discernment, integrity, and wisdom, along with our lived experiences, focus us toward the right path because we live by the laws of nature. There are no complications; we keep it simple.

Many books have been written by amazing advocates on the subject of witchcraft, but very few have lived it. This book is different as it applies profound wisdoms to your everyday life, helping you to walk your chosen path. My advice to you is to release any preconceived ideas about what Scottish witchcraft is; rather, make it your own. It's time to remember and reawaken that which resides within you. For woven into every invocation, spell, and magick potion is the alchemy of the practitioner, the wise woman or man, the witch that understands and applies all the wisdom and knowledge that they need for this lifetime. Witchcraft is the path of the wise and by knowing your own craft and way of life, you can weave seamlessly between the worlds.

Once you believe in your own power and awaken it, everything changes and your soul comes home again. So mote it be.

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chapter one

A Discovery of Witches

Burn the witch! Burn the witch! Those words still echo within my soul, and I remember again standing in the school playground, surrounded by children chanting those words, as if it was a continuing story from one lifetime to the next. I was being dragged to a stake, although in the playground it was a pole. I could see that the children were acting out without remembering previous lifetimes of torturing those with second sight, midwifery skills, healing abilities, and so on. It had all started with me because I could see those in the spirit world—something I thought everybody could do—and people were scared when I told them. My parents insisted it was nothing more than my vivid imagination.

However, things turned ugly after I had a dream of Jonny, my friend in school who was a few years older than me. In my dream he broke his leg. I was really upset by this and asked the old lady who visited me regularly at night when I went to bed if it would be okay to tell him. She said it is important to tell the person involved so that they would be safe. That's why I was given those dreams: to help people. The choice was theirs whether they listened or not. Self-assured, the next day I approached Jonny and said, "I have just had a dream of you breaking your leg when you jump over that wall while playing with your friends behind us. Please be careful." He just laughed, shouting out to his friends, "Witchy Woo has had one of her funny dreams again. She says I'm going to break my leg," at which point he gave me a look of complete disgust and walked away.

From that moment on he completely ostracised me. I felt alone. Why does this happen when all I want to do is help people? Why are they so scared of me? I cried myself to sleep most nights, heartbroken. My parents thought I was strange. The teachers belted me all the time, telling me I was stupid, an idiot, because I refused to use my right hand, telling me it was evil to write with my left hand. The teachers and school children taunted me because I could not spell or speak correctly and I was always talking to "imaginary" people. Once again, I dreamt of Jonny falling and breaking his leg, but I was too afraid to say anything this time. As I approached the playground of my junior school, I saw Jonny and his friends were playing near the wall. As Jonny took a run at the wall to jump on it, he slipped, crashing into it instead. He lay there crying and screaming in pain. As he pointed his finger at me, I saw a scene of a previous lifetime unfold. I could see the medieval village, the lake, the angry people, the pile of wood ... everything. Suddenly I heard Jonny shouting, "She did this to me! She made me break my leg!"

I was aware of all the kids in the playground grabbing hold of me and dragging me to the post in the middle of the playing field. They tied me to the post using their jumpers and started chanting, "Burn the witch! Burn the witch!" Then I was being hit—stones, apples, anything that they could find. If it wasn't for Mrs. Anderson, my teacher, who'd heard the commotion, I don't know what would have happened. Perhaps history would have repeated itself, but this time my fate would have been at the hands of other children, being battered to death rather than at the hands of men and women, being burnt alive. I was dragged by the scruff of my collar to the headmaster Mr. MacLeod, but he had no interest in my explanation. Instead he beat me with the belt across my hands until they bled, refusing to stop unless I admitted that I caused Jonny to break his leg. Desperate, I gave in. I was an evil witch and had caused Jonny's accident. I was sent home with a letter to my parents instructing them to take me to church and admit my evil ways and informing them that I was a sinner and needed to be beaten until I repented.

Life was horrendous. I was beaten every day at home by my mother, at church by the sisters, and in school because the teachers and the schoolchildren feared me. I was always put outside the classroom wearing a coned dunce's cap (really a witch's hat) and made to stand there all day. I learned very quickly that I could go out into the trees at the back of the school and stay there for a couple of hours without being found out. The birds, insects, and hedgehogs became my friends and I would talk to them and confide in them my sorrows and pain. Life at home, school, and church was unbearable and I was completely on my own, or so I thought.

Then one night the old lady visited me again. She looked like a grandmother, but scarier. She wore strange clothing, very dark in colour except for a tartan wrap around her shoulders and head. Her hair was matted and white, and her face was very wrinkled as she glowered at me. Her bony hands rested upon a white wooden stick. She sat on the edge of my bed and looked deep inside of me with her steely pale eyes and said, "Daughter, you have chosen to walk this ancient path. You have gone through all these persecutions for a reason. I know it is hard for you and you feel alone, but soon you will have someone come into your life who will help and assist you

in the work you have come here to do." But I did not understand these words. I just looked at her with tears running down my face and asked, "Why am I different from the rest of the children? Why can I see dead people, speak to the animals, see different lifetimes and other places, see energy in people, and see their illness?" She looked at me with a knowing smile and said, "Child, don't you worry, you will see, you will get the help you need, and it will all be as it should be." She sat with me until I stopped crying, then disappeared as quickly as she had appeared.

No longer feeling quite so alone, I fought all the way against the system of control, those who were trying to beat out of me my spirit, my life force energy, telling me I was a child of the devil. Of course, it did not help me one little bit when I would respond that they had created the devil and I did not believe in him! I remember standing rigid to the spot in the classroom one day after I was beaten in front of the class because I could not spell. In those days the teachers did not understand dyslexia, so I was classed as stupid because I could not keep up with the other children. They would tie my left hand behind my back and make me write with my right hand. One day I was made to stand on my desk and tell the children that I was stupid, but instead I said, "I already know what I need to know; I don't need to learn this rubbish you are trying to teach me!" As I stood on my desk with Mr. Sharp beating my legs with the belt and all the children jeering and shouting at me, I vowed that nothing and no one would ever harm me again.

Over the years I have spoken to many people who gave up and conformed to others' expectations, gave away their personal power for a quieter life, who fitted in to please others, to make them happy. Had it not been for the old woman, I don't know what I would have done. I called her that, not knowing at the time, that she was the Cailleach. In Scottish, Irish, and Manx mythology, she is an ancestral spirit who endures all things; no matter how difficult or harsh life may be, she ensures a way through. When I look back at this time in my life, I give thanks to her, also known as Beira, Queen of the Winter, who kept me warm, nurtured me, supported me, and ensured that I remained strong to weather out the storms that I would face in my younger years. There were others too who came to watch over me. I called them "Watchers" or "Guardians" because they protected me. My life all the way to my late forties was one of learning the hard way. When my mother would ask, "Why do you always want to learn the hard way?" My response was, "It's the only way I know how, so as not to make the mistakes again." More often than not, I had to go over the lessons again and again.

But my life was to change forever when I met Swein MacDonald, the Highland Seer. I was around thirteen years old and had moved into secondary school. I was a rebel with a cause but kept this close to my heart. By then, my family, friends, priest, and nuns all thought I was a good Christian girl. I had learned how to keep quiet and please people. I remember the buzz in school because Swein MacDonald was coming to Inverness and was holding a meeting at a house on Union Street, very near to where I lived. "Who is this Highland Seer?" I asked my friend Elaine. She said he could see dead people and read fortunes. I was very excited! Maybe he was someone who could help me. So that evening, having told my mother I was at my friend's house, I went to the meeting. The house my friends and I entered was very strange compared to other houses; there were so many pictures of people all over the walls. I was later to learn that the lady who hosted Swein was a trance medium and psychic artist. As I walked through the hallway, I could hear this big booming voice that made me quiver. As I entered the living room, this big man with a beard pointed his finger at me. As I shrank back, he said, "She has the gift of the second sight. Where have you been hiding her?"

I was afraid and in awe; there was an energy about Swein that I had never seen the likes of before, so many colours and spirits swirling around him. I was totally fascinated by him. Then I heard the voice of the Old Hag saying, "This is who I have been speaking about all these years. He will help you to awaken and remember who you are."

All the while Swein was watching me. "So you know the Cailleach, then?" he asked.

I had no idea what he was talking about. "Who?" I asked.

"The old woman who has been visiting you," he replied.

I was dumbfounded. How could he know this? I had told nobody about my visitations, in fear of being classed as mad or locked away. I had been threatened that many times and was not about to say otherwise in front of a group of strangers.

Swein laughed out loud and said, "Lassie, do not fret. Come and visit me at my croft in Ardgay." With that, he turned away and started chatting with all the other people in the room.

As I walked back home with my friends and their mums, we all chatted about what had happened that night. Swein had given everybody a message and we were all excited about the predictions coming true. Arriving home, I made my excuses to my mum, saying I was tired, and hurried upstairs to my bedroom. I was so excited—finally, after thirteen years, somebody knew who I was!

The feeling of recognition, of being seen for who you are, is incredible. So I now ask you to consider your own situation and how you feel about who and what you are. As a child, did you have an awareness of who you were, where you came from, and why you are here? Did you remember your past lives? Perhaps you acted them during play. Did you see spirits, feel them, sense them, and talk to them? Are you waiting to be seen, for someone to say, "I know who you are, I know where you come from, and I know why you are here in this lifetime"? If we go back in time to the days of the clans or tribes, the wise people of each tribe would use the gift of seership and divination to predict a child's future.

Up until the mid-twentieth century, Scottish witchcraft had always been a solitary, oral tradition, meaning there is no definitive literature about it. If a generation stopped, or had chosen a different path, then a chosen apprentice was initiated by the seer to hand down the wisdom and knowledge, which again would be done orally —even up to this present day. Any written information about Scottish witchcraft is largely based on third- or fourth-hand observations of later practitioners of the craft, or by others jumping on the broomstick. Only those whose ancestors walked on this land know the true meaning. Each wise woman or man of these ancient lands knew that their tradition was sacred to them and that the knowledge and wisdom they learned themselves was gifted to them by the ancestors and spirits of the land, the elements, the seas, by Mother Nature herself. No two wise ones were the same.

Living in the Highlands of Scotland was harsh, from being a weather witch—predicting and controlling, both on land and sea, which way the weather would affect the crops, animals, and sailings—to locating lost items, prescribing cures, removing curses, protecting people's homes and families, and using second sight for predictions and to help bring balance to the local communities. Witches (or *buidseachan* in Scottish) weren't just the healers, herbalists, and seers but also the social workers, psychologists, and midwives. Witches were the glue that held the clans, villages, and communities together. Today these qualities have been separated out among many, and people are being told that if you are a medium or spirit-walker, for example, you cannot be a healer or herbalist too—rubbish; you can multitask.

Tales abound of witches and wise women and men of the ancient lands of Scotland. Whatever may be true, the practice of witchcraft is steeped in mystery, just like the thousands of cairns, stone monuments, hill forts, and settlements built by people unknown. On the Isle of Rhum, for example, was a community that dates back to 8500 BC. From the Winged Temple of the Hyperboreans, which Herodotus wrote about, to Skara Brae, a stone-built settlement built in the Neolithic period on the Orkney Islands, comes an almost tangible sense of knowing that the ancestors of these ancient lands knew its profound meaning. I am sure these people had the tools, skills, and knowledge of Scottish witchcraft and implemented them in their culture for the benefit of the communities that they lived in.

The wise women and men of these ancient tribes knew that their purpose was to help facilitate, from birth to death, a rite of passage in assisting the people of the clan or tribe to live good lives. They were the glue, the very fabric of the community that held everything together so that the people could go about their daily lives knowing that if they needed herbs, healing, or words of wisdom, they could rely on these wise ones.

We know that the Celts came to Europe in the first millennium before Christ. They were a nomadic people who brought with them their cattle from the faraway shores of the Caspian Sea. When the Caesars came to Scotland, they were faced with a formidable tribe known as the Picts or the "painted ones" who ensured that the Romans would never reach the Highlands of Scotland. They used a hallucinogenic drink made from plants to enforce their powers of strength and energy against the invaders. I remember playing amongst hill forts, faery hills and glens, barrows, cairns, and stone circles as if they were my own. I always saw them as how they once were—when people lived and performed rituals and ceremonies in them. I have very fond memories of Craig Phadrig; this vitrified fort was believed to have been the stronghold where the Pictish King Brude resided. Inverness has always been known as the capital of the Picts and is now the capital of the Highlands. Stories tell of a witch who was often consulted by King Brude in matters of state. In AD 565, St. Columba visited this great king to convert the pagan Picts. Once this king was converted to Christianity, the once so-revered witch was banished. And this is a story that repeats itself throughout history, where the witch or wise man or woman, honoured and respected by their communities, is kicked out because they are seen to go against the newly acquired religious convictions of the ruling classes, something that still continues today in countries such as Saudi Arabia, Tanzania, Nepal, India, Uganda, and Papua New Guinea.

Moving from the Dark Ages into the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, we enter a period where witch trials were rampant in Europe. Thousands of people were tried; the overwhelming majority were women. They were either executed, banished, outlawed, acquitted, or ignored by the people they had once helped and supported. Fires burnt over the Scottish towns that instilled the fear of death in many a poor soul. If anything went at all wrong, the blame was left at the doorsteps of unfortunate people. In 1563 a law was passed during the reign of Mary, Queen of Scots, that would change everything. Those who practiced witchcraft would be tried because it was now a capital offence. This continued until the last witch was burnt by tar and fire in 1727.

Scotland was having a terrible time not only with the witch trials but also the Jacobite rising of 1745 and the Highland Clearances, the forced eviction of inhabitants of the Highlands and western islands of Scotland, to allow for the introduction of sheep pastoralism. The Highland Clearances resulted in the destruction of the traditional clan society and began a pattern of rural depopulation and emigration from Scotland where an estimated seventy thousand people were shipped to America, Canada, and Australia. Families were ripped apart and people never saw their homes again. You can imagine what it felt like to live in these times: terrible. People lived in fear and were quick to point the finger. Most of them were simple souls who had mental health problems or physical disabilities or were too outspoken. A great number of widows who lived on their own were condemned, especially if they had a black cat. Animals such as cats, snakes, hares, and toads were looked upon suspiciously and deemed as witches' familiars. It was always the poor middle-aged woman who spoke as she saw fit, lived on her own, and had herbs in her garden and animals that was the prime target.

Witches were blamed for everything, including plagues, famine, bad weather, sickness, and death. It did not help that hygiene and living conditions were appalling. From small pox to measles and other diseases that laid claim to young children, the witches were blamed. Even if the milk turned sour, the old woman in the cottage in the woods would be blamed. However, nobody was safe. If one fell out with or cursed their neighbour, that person would also be accused. Of course, it did not help the witches that they had built up such a great reputation as healers, herbalists, charmers, soothsayers, and as they were left wide open for retribution. People were careful not to speak out of turn, in case they were blamed for something they did not do. Of course, once accused, the witch was quickly persuaded to implicate others. Husbands, children, friends, and neighbours were all called into account. Not only that but, because people lived in fear, they thought it better to accuse another rather than being accused themselves.

It is quite revealing that the English word "witch" only appears in the Bible after King James VI of Scotland (I of England) had it rewritten. He was fearful of witches and pagans in general after the North Berwick witches planned for his ship to sink on its return voyage from Denmark. In those days it was widely believed that witches could raise a storm, sink a ship, or create a heavy mist to fall by using their craft. The trials implicated seventy people, stating that large gatherings and meetings of witches occurred, which was illegal. This was the first time that it was recorded that witches were meeting—the first coven, perhaps? What's also interesting to note is that the famous quote of "suffer not a witch to live" was mistranslated by King James himself to serve his own benefits. The original wording was "thou shalt not suffer a poisoner to live," meaning a murderer.

This single word change was disastrous for the thousands of innocent people who were persecuted for something that was not true. The persecutors were not even aware of the truth, but did they really care either way? The next time someone says anything to you about being a witch, you can tell them the correct meaning of the Bible that was rewritten by someone who had no knowledge of what the translation meant in the sixteenth century and decided for himself. *He* was the murderer of the true meaning behind the original quote that had been written thousands of years ago. He was talking about himself all along. Talk about reverse psychology.

We will never know the full extent of how many died when the witch hunt began. Many brave women and men stood up for their belief systems even when it meant they would die for their convictions. If what you have read so far makes you feel a sense of anger or injustice or question what is true or what has been suppressed—perhaps you have been taunted for being different or for sensing things in a different way or even having a "knowledge" of things or heightened sense of intuition—then perhaps you were a witch in a past life. The key is getting to know yourself first and foremost.

Knowing Yourself

I have found that to walk the path of a witch, a wise one, you first have to learn about yourself. This brings me to a quote that I use a lot in my workshops on psychic protection and personal power, "Know thyself." It is an aphorism found inscribed in the forecourt of the temple of Apollo at Delphi. This applies to the work we are about to undertake within this book. Knowing yourself is digging deep within to discover and understand what makes you tick, why and how to use all that you are for the highest good. It's an unpredictable road that you will walk, in whatever form it takes to enhance and draw out the witch within! You will, and most likely have already, faced your insecurities and self-doubts, making you stronger, but what we need to do now is get to grips with the very fine details of your authentic self. Both in witchcraft and personal development, you need to know your intent, integrity, honesty, and purpose. As above so below, as within so without. By becoming the observer of your thoughts, words, actions, and deeds, you put foundations in place for your magickal work as you learn how to retain and manage your personal power.

Many of us give away our personal power to others without realising we are doing it. How do you feel right now? Do you feel strong and in control of your own life or do others control how you feel and think and what you do? Do you know exactly where you are going in your life or do you feel insecure, unsure, relying on someone else to do things for you? What I find interesting is that often people believe that they know what's best for not only their lives but everyone else's too. When they make you a prisoner of their insecurities and project their blames, fears, guilts, and phobias onto you, start running fast before they place you back in perjury once again. A powerful witch is very self-aware; they know exactly who they are, what they want, how and when to speak their truth, and they stand in their power fully. They are not afraid of anything or anyone. Take time now to sit and awaken to your authentic witch within—the wise woman or man who has the ancient wisdom running through them. It is time to do an invocation that will call deeply to your soul's knowing. Before you go to bed.

Witches of old, I draw down your power to awaken my wisdom upon this new hour. Empowerment is mine as I seize my birthright; potions and cauldrons are no cause for fright. I rise up and harness my wisdom deep, journeys to take, secrets to keep. Invoke the magick to bind us as one;

by alluring enchantment, united, it's done.

Though this book is about my story of Scottish witchcraft, it will lead you on a journey through the Highlands of Scotland and around the world. I will share with you the teachings of the Scottish Old Ways. These are not written down but handed down orally from grandmothers and grandfathers, mothers and fathers, who share the wisdom of the craft. This is a lived experience. I could not learn well from books due to being dyslexic, so I learned firsthand from the ancestors or spirits. They shaped me, guided me, and showed me how to become a wise woman. Scottish witchcraft is about the practice of magick in everyday life. With your personal life and your magickal life, you need to live a balanced way of life. It's twenty-four seven, every day. When we use witchcraft in our everyday life, we draw the spiritual power toward us. Like attracts like, so when we live our life in a spiritual way, developing and reinforcing our personal power for the good of all, we attract the spiritual power, the magick of the universe, into our lives. When we work with magick, we harness energy, both internal and external, that changes us and everything around us. Now would be a good time to begin reinstating all of what you are, and we can begin this process with your very own Book of Shadows.

Book of Shadows

There are some who say that a Book of Shadows (BOS) should only be used by Wiccans (those who practice Pagan witchcraft, developed in England during the first half of the twentieth century). However, in today's world we need to understand that we all work for the greatest good of humanity. Regardless of whether we are witches, Wiccans, non-Wiccans, Pagans, or non-Pagans, it's important to do what feels right for you and not what others tell you is right for you. The only person you have to answer to is yourself. The more you let go of that which does not serve your highest purpose, the more powerful and wise you will become. But still many people have a fear of coming out of the "broom closet." Creating your own Book of Shadows is a brilliant place to start the process of living the real you, so let us begin.

Your Book of Shadows is your journal, most sacred and personal to you. It is very important that nobody sees or reads it. It needs to be kept in a place where nobody else can touch it. I keep mine wrapped up in a black cloth, stashed in a safe, dry place. You can either buy or make your own BOS. If at all possible, try to get one with recycled paper or old paper. Once you have your own book, take the time to cleanse and clear it the energy of anyone else who may have handled it before you. It's also good if a magickal practitioner or witch can make it for you or bless what you have, as it will ensure magickal properties are imbued within it. At the front of the BOS, write your code of ethics—what's personal to you; it can be as comprehensive or as simple as you choose. Below is an example I have written that incorporates the importance of honouring the craft, the elements, and the magick you create. You can use it if you wish.

Code of My Craft

Follow nature's laws, 'tis always best; honour them and discard the rest. Listen to the whispers of the moon, speaking of what has passed by too soon. Be open to the powers of the sun, as you dance in wonder of what is to come. The four winds that blow from each direction, offer guidance, news, and protection. Ensure your spells are said in rhyme, for this will bind them every time. Cauldron awaits the wood below, choose well to help the magick flow. Birch, hazel, and more to come, serve a purpose, learn what must be done. The festive times be sure to mark, when seasons turn from light to dark. Samhain, Yule, and many more are all there for you to attend and explore. Take up your place, never that of others, consider the needs of your sisters and brothers. Let your words be few, but always wise, listen well and use your eyes. Honour those who have gone before, allow their presence to be with you once more. Greeting in joy and departing the same, harbours good feelings till you meet again. Three times over, prepare your space, to keep out unwelcome foe and face.

Spending too long with those who deceive in a rush, taints you with the very same brush.

Be not the first to break a trust,
but if trust is broken, call it out you must.

All good things come in three,
so too does misfortune, aware you must be.

Now with these few words the Code is done,
"Do as you will, with harm to none."

Next write down your deities' names and the pantheon they belong to. It's okay if they come from different belief systems; all that matters is that they are important to you. Also write down what they mean to you. Include any information for your tradition and the path that feels right for you. Next write down the Wheel of the Year to mark important festivals throughout the year.

Observing this natural cycle has been very important to both the ancients and those of us today that honour its modern invention. Again, everyone has a different outlook on what the Wheel of the Year means to them. Different names, different dates. The following is another example for you to use. You can include all the explanations, meanings, etc., or simplify it with just the dates and key facts. It is your choice.

Wheel of the Year

- Samhain, October 31: The Crone revered; respecting our ancestors, healing our hurts. Traditionally called Samhain (or Samhuinn in Scotland), it was an old Celtic celebration of summer's end marking the final harvest when the cattle were taken down off the hills into the barns. Fires were lit on the night of October 31, and villagers would burn crops and animals for their gods and goddesses and to give thanks for the bounty of the harvest. The souls of the dead of the Underworld were set free for that night and a place was set aside at the table for them. It is a liminal time when the veil between the worlds is at its thinnest and we are more able to connect with the world of ancestors and spirit. We invite the Cailleach to cradle us during the dark months to come, enabling us to release all that no longer serves us. This is not an easy time, but in knowing how to build firm foundations, you will know how to ride out any winter storms to come.
- Yule, December 21-22: The Crone fades; the returning sun, exploring the essence of our being. As the Yule log burns in the hearth keeping the fires of life alive, people bring in holly, pine cones, and winter greens to decorate the home. This is to bring nature into the home and keep it alive throughout the winter. Mistletoe is hung above the hearth so that couples can kiss and bring joy, happiness, laughter, and love. This ancient tradition of kissing under the mistletoe was to honour Odin's second son, Balder. This is a time-honoured tradition when our ancestors and faeries alike would gather to welcome the return of the sun. At the Winter Solstice, the sun appears at its weakest, having waned in strength since its peak at Summer Solstice six months earlier. Great cheers ring out in celebration, for the very next winter's morning, the sun starts its ascent as it steadily becomes stronger and heads toward the summer months once again. The birth of the sun—the light of the world. It is a wonderful time for feasting and celebration, a time to welcome family and friends into your home.
- Imbolc, February 1-2: The young Maiden; innocence, purity, seeding the dream and birthing the inner child. This is a time of emergence as new shoots appear from the ground, early flowers begin to blossom, and we begin to witness the start of the renewal of life. Daylight hours become noticeably longer at this time and we witness the birth of the very first lambs. This was an important time in the northern hemisphere for our ancestors, as fresh milk once again became available, making the difference between life and death after the cold, harsh scarcity of winter. At Imbolc today, it is still a Pagan tradition to pour fresh milk on the ground to honour the earth faeries and to ensure fertility for the coming season in the agricultural communities. Imbolc is a time of purification in preparation for the coming year and is portrayed as the young virgin Maiden aspect of the Celtic Triple Goddess. She is Bride, the young girl awakening to womanhood just as nature begins its fertility cycle. Women and girls from the villages would make a doll from the last sheaf of straw from the last harvest of the year before. They would carry this doll around the village to each household for a blessing. Once this was done, the tools were stained with whiskey before the first furrow was cut and the fields were blessed with burning stick of mugwort to ward off bad luck. Bride crosses, also known as solar crosses, were woven from rushes and placed around the home for protection. Candles were placed on the windows sills to honour and welcome the Goddess into the hearth. This is the time to seed your new ideas, make plans, and begin creative projects.
- Ostara, March 21-22: The Maiden matures; from dark to light, signs of growth and discernment. When we are aligned with the natural world, we too can embrace and honour the new creative power that is stirred in throughout nature. Ostara heralds the Spring Equinox—a time of balance between light and dark, a day of equilibrium. This is a good time to look at what needs balancing in your life, what you wish to gain, and that which you wish to banish. It is also a time for honouring new life and is the festival that has been "borrowed" to become Easter—think hatched eggs, baby chicks, and all the fresh promises of spring. This is the time that the kern doll, made from last year's harvest, is taken into the first field and burnt to ensure that any person or spirits

of place could not interfere. This form of cursing was very effective and ensured no harm would come to the crops. The seeds planted at Imbolc need time to nurture deep within the earth, and even though these seedlings may now be appearing, still we are yet to witness them grow into full bloom. Try a little patience, as Ostara is a time of incubation, for the development of any projects, wishes, spells, and dreams you have breathed energy into. Everything is simmering under the surface and the timing is perfect to bring the best results. That which you cannot see needs to take place first, so don't try to speed up the process; trust and allow the natural order of things to take place.

- Beltane, May 1-2: The Mother; fertile minds, bodies, and souls, birthing our ideas and soul's knowing. Large bonfires are lit on ancient hilltops and mounds to welcome and honour the sun. All the hearth fires are rekindled. In lowland Scotland and England, villagers gather to eat together and sup ale as they are treated to traditional morris dancing and a May queen is chosen. Local children dance around a decorated maypole, which is an English custom. It is a phallic symbol representing the traditional rituals that were once held to promote fertility for livestock and people alike. Beltane is a time of the blending of energies of the feminine and masculine to celebrate the sacredness of sexuality. The Goddess takes on the God as her lover in order to give birth to the full bloom of nature during summer months to come. Beltane marks the return of full life, and nature is fully honoured in the fresh bright flowers, grasses, and leaves that have started to push through. It is an abundant time of year when nature is at full bloom, a great celebration for the faery realm. It is a time when goals that were set at the beginning of the year come into fruition, when projects take off and relationships bloom. We sow our seeds at Imbolc and the Goddess from her union with the God gives birth to the idea. At Beltane it springs into reality and continues to grow and blossom.
- Litha, June 21-22: The Mother glorified; celebration of light, being in our full glory. As the sun starts to rise on midsummer's dawn, people make their way to the tops of ancient hills or mounds or sacred stone sites to celebrate the sun rising. As the sun appears, hands are raised to welcome the sun and are kept raised until the sun is fully on the horizon. This is the season that celebrates the sun festival of Litha, or Summer Solstice, which is when the sun is at its highest point in the sky. Once the celebration of the rising of the sun is complete, family and friends celebrate with a breakfast feast and then singing and dancing. This is a time of intensification, of focus, development, and determination as you become stronger and claim the full self-power you are aiming toward. This is a time of year when the veil between worlds is torn down. Faery rings of mushrooms, toadstools, and flowers can be found, and those with an open heart are invited in to connect with the magick of the Fae at the faery trees.
- Lammas, August 1: The Mother matures; gratitude for earthly, physical sustenance. Lammas marks the first harvest of the year. It is the gathering in of the grains and celebrates the sun god Lugh, aka John Barleycorn, who is cut down in his glory only to rise again the following year. This is a time of feasting, a time of plenty and for acknowledging the cycle of life, death, and rebirth. This is a time to climb, once again, a high hill with offerings to the sun. Once this is done, a visit to a faery well or clootie tree to bring gifts and offerings to the fae. (A clootie tree is a tree near a holy well that people tie a piece of their clothing to after taking the holy water. It is a symbol of long life and health.) At Lammas planted seeds have grown into an abundant crop and now the harvest has been reaped. This is looked at as a time of opportunity and good fortune, for these are carefree days of summer when everything is going your way. Dreams have come to fruition and are ripe for the picking. Appreciate and bless everything that comes your way.
- Mabon, September 21-22: The Crone; the art of contemplation explored, self-sufficiency of mind, body, and spirit. Mabon celebrates the Autumn Equinox, when daylight and darkness are in balance with each other before the darker days of winter set in. This is time of going deep within to reflect on the months beforehand and to count our blessings for the abundance that has been bestowed upon us throughout the year thus far. The reapers run to the hill for the last time once the harvest is completed and all the grains are in the barns. The reapers mix the grains from the previous year to the new grains for the following year's sowing. At this time of balance and the acknowledgement of the fruit harvest, you are reminded that you too are a part of nature. Therefore, it is harvest time for you too. Recall your fondest memories; take those seeds and mix them with this moment in time as you focus for what is yet to come.

Equally important to your craft is getting familiar with the cycles of the moon. Ancient wisdom and magick awakens when you work with the phases of the moon. It's important when harvesting that you have a knowledge of the moon phases and cycles, especially if you are moon planting and harvesting or working with candle magick or bodies of water. Again, what follows is something you can include in your BOS in full or just take key words related to each cycle, and again the choice is yours.

Moon Cycles

- **Dark or old moon** is a powerful time to banish or remove things, people, or situations, a time to neutralise spells made against others, for understanding fears and anger, and also is good for bringing about justice. Time of transition from the dark moon to the new moon.
- Waxing crescent moon is about constructive magick, new beginnings, new relationships, the best time to set intentions and to focus intention for positive outcomes.

- **First quarter moon** is the best time to draw things in: money, success, friends, lovers, work. It is a time for attracting that which you most desire into manifestation. Also, a good time for house hunting or finding lost objects. Time of acceleration and growth.
- Waxing gibbous moon is for renewal of strength and energy. Focus on will-power and seeing things through. Surrender to the universe and trust. This is the most powerful time of the moon for fruition and completion.
- Full moon releases what no longer serves and removes old habits and other issues. This is a time to harness extra power to get over difficult challenges. It is good for rituals and spells of protection, divination, and healing of long-standing illness. This is the time of manifestation and empowerment. The full moon is the most potent moon.
- Waning gibbous moon is time to expel all negative thoughts and influences. Waning moon energies rid and repel. It is a time to decrease, to bring to an end, to face shadows.
 - Last quarter moon is a time of transitions and change, to avoid temptations—a remover of obstacles.
- Waning crescent moon is about banishment and retreat. A healing of transition between the death of the old and the birth of the new moon.

Between the dark and the waxing crescent moon is a period of stillness called the new moon, the space between the past and new beginnings, a very powerful phase of transition.

Now I would look into the days of the week and make a note of them, as they are of particular help in spellwork, when connecting to specific gods/goddess, and in relation to working with the emotional body. This list is again a good basis, from a Scottish witchcraft point of view, but you can research and intuit what might work best for you.

Magickal Weekdays

- **Sunday** is the day attributed to the god Sulis and is ruled by the sun. This day is imbued with energy and divine guidance. It is a perfect day to relax, unwind, and focus on health and well-being to light up one's very being.
- **Monday** is the day attributed to the goddess Luna and is ruled by the moon. This is a day for discovering one's true potential and intuition, looking deep within, and honouring emotions that will out.
- **Tuesday** is the day attributed to Tiw and is ruled by Mars. This is a day of projects, decision making, and new jobs. It is a perfect day to fulfill dreams, goals, and desires.
- **Wednesday** is the day attributed to the god Woden and is ruled by Mercury. This is a day of expressing oneself and focusing on life decisions made form a holistic perspective. It is a time for open communication and clear messages.
- **Thursday** is the day attributed to the god Thunor and is ruled by Jupiter. This is a day of gratitude and positivity and a time of expansion of the mind, body, and spirit.
- **Friday** is the day attributed to the goddess Frigg and is ruled by Venus. An auspicious day of love and selfcare and a time to create and connect with others.
- **Saturday** is the day of Arawn and is ruled by Saturn. This is a day to be grounded and balanced. It is a great day to tackle big projects and a day of being responsible and getting organised both at home and at work, especially by clearing out that which no longer serves.

Next, I would suggest listing the five basic elements—earth, water, fire, air, and spirit—and what they mean to you. You could also include a colour chart for working with candle magick and what the colours mean (these should be the colours most appropriate to you). I would also list the astrological signs and their meanings to help you with spells.

In time, and as you read and work with this book, you will be able to add in personal spells and rituals that work for you—this will be ongoing as you become more confident in your work and increase your knowledge of the various spells (some of which are included in this book). In so doing, include all herbs (some suggestions are also in this book) and incenses that work for you, along with essential oils that you love. Add crystals and their properties and how they affect you. Write out any recipes of the herbs and foods you enjoy, especially if you are interested in becoming a kitchen witch, and include potions, salves, and tinctures that work for you.

Your BOS is also a place where you can be creative with how your altar should be laid out. You might want to draw sketches of your tools, write ideas for being crafty, and note signs and symbols that you connect with, such as witches' and Viking runes. Other things to include are invocations, poems, and chants that you have written or ones that you have learned from others. You can also include meditations and journey work that you are drawn to and that work for you. You might find yourself putting in photos or tarot cards that you feel connected with. Remember your BOS can also be used for journaling your dreams and dream interpretations.

Your Book of Shadows is the almanac of your life and your life's work. Decorate it with personal symbols of protection to ward off intruders who might wish to look inside. This is your record of your magickal experiences, not for the eyes or minds of anyone else. Hopefully one day you can pass this down to your daughters or sons to preserve for future generations to come. Something that will also become clearer as you begin to put your BOS

together is discovering the type or types of witch and workings you feel drawn to. The types of witch that you are will reveal themselves; there are many, so now we can look at some.

Which Witch Is Which?

There have been so many pioneers in witchcraft who have fought for their beliefs. Modern witchcraft started at the beginning of the 1950s. Gerald Gardner brought witchcraft to the forefront of people's minds and changed a lot of belief systems about who and what witches are. He was known as the father of Wicca, which has since spread around the world. From Gardnerian witchcraft to Alexandrian witchcraft, many of these wise men and women lifted the ban on witchcraft that had been in place for over two centuries. The mother of modern witchcraft was Doreen Valiente. An exhibition in Brighton, West Sussex, holds her extensive collection of Wiccan and occult artefacts. She was the High Priestess to Gerald Gardner. You will come to resonate with what is right for you, which might be Wicca, Scottish witchcraft, or a mix of others.

I have found over fifty different types of witches within witchcraft. For example, I am a Scottish solitary witch, working with my soul sister and co-author of our many oracle decks, Flavia, who is a faery/green/hedge witch and a solitary. We are both also hereditary witches and kitchen witches. We both weave our extensive knowledge of shamanic work alongside witchcraft and have termed it "Shamanic Witchcraft." It's important to note that you can weave between different forms of witchcraft, making it your own personal form. If anyone ever says you cannot do this or that in your magickal work, walk away. Your witchcraft is your inner knowing combined with the craft of the ancient ones who first worked with nature, ancestors, and the spirits of the land. Witchcraft is ancient and old and has been with us since our ancestors first walked on planet Earth. Do what feels right for you. We cannot get burnt, hung, drowned, or stoned today for what we believe in. Stand up for your beliefs and your way of life. Use the tools that feel right for you.

Scottish witchcraft focuses on working on oneself first, to harness the witch's inner powers. Once this is achieved, the witch then draws on his or her inner power to connect with the magickal powers of the ancestors, land, nature, source, and deities of Scotland. This personal empowerment, coupled with spiritual empowerment, creates a powerful force to be reckoned with. Never be afraid to speak your truth and stand by your beliefs, even if you feel threatened by those that say they know more. Those that boast or brag about what they know are the ones you walk away from. I have learned how *not* to be from those who purport to know far too eagerly. Those that do know go quietly about their work, for they have nothing to prove to themselves or anyone else. They are not insecure like the boasters, for they are one. Below are some of the main types of witches, but be mindful: we are not limited by having labels placed upon us. It is important to follow your religion, lifestyle, beliefs, and customs. You can follow a traditional path of witchcraft created by your ancestors or by those who have gone before you. The wonderful thing about witchcraft is it knows no boundaries, no rules, no regulations, no set dogma, and as I said before, if someone or a group of people tries to tell you otherwise, say no. That's one of the first important words to learn in witchcraft.

Types of Witches

- Ancestral witches are based in folk magick that varies from country to country. Its focus is on working directly with the dead.
- **Eclectic witches** draw on different forms of witchcraft tailored to suit an individual's taste. There are no rules and regulations, just an openness to be at one with all, knowing that it all comes from the same source.
- Green witches focus on the earth, nature, and the elements: working with folk magick and folk lore, using trees, flowers, and herbs, connecting with the divine in their gardens. They have a working partnership with the spirit of the plants, gnomes, pixies, nymphs, and faeries.
- **Hedge witches** live between the worlds. They work with healing and midwifery in birth and death. They walk between the boundaries of the spirit world and our physical reality.
- Hereditary witches are born into a family who are practicing witchcraft and have passed it down from generation to generation. This also includes those who have been chosen to be an apprentice when a witch does not have anyone to pass it on to in the family.
- **Kitchen witches** make their home and surroundings sacred. Everyday magick flows through the practical and mundane tasks from cooking to potions, spells, lotions, tonics, and using rituals, ceremonies, and tools of the kitchen to weave magick in all they do in their homes.
- Solitary witches work alone, not in a coven or group. They do not belong to any organisation. Legends abound that from lifetime to lifetime they awaken their own inner knowledge and wisdom upon reaching puberty. They remember who they are and work with the witch within.

Take time to learn as much as you can about yourself during the process. Remove things that no longer serve you. Become as a hollow bone so that the magick can flow through you more easily and look at ways of removing any blockages to this flow; this might involve looking at mirror work, cleansing, or simply speaking to the person who is stopping you move forward. And a vital part of discovering yourself is to know where you have come from; it empowers you and helps you to grow and develop your chosen craft.

Often people are drawn to witchcraft because they watch movies of the same ilk and want to be magickal, practice magick, and perform spells. It's not as easy as that. That's like getting into a 747 aircraft and trying to fly it without having learned to fly. Many do not understand the Threefold Law (also known as the Rule of Three and the Law of Return), which states that whatever energy a person puts out into the world, be it positive or negative, will be returned to that person three times. In other words, what you give out comes back to you and then some! Many people do not consider or even understand the potential consequences that can result from a spell backfiring nor how to deal with it.

Too many people make witchcraft seem complicated, clandestine, or secretive, as if to deliberately scare others off or hoard what they know just for themselves. Scottish witchcraft is none of these things, but you have to practice, practice, practice—all the time. I never stop learning about different aspects of witchcraft because there are so many branches of the tree to learn from. Remember you are connected to all that is "above" (the upper worlds of Father Sky and the endless blue universe), all that is "below" (the lower worlds of Mother Nature and all creatures of the earth and all living beings), and all that is "within" (spirit, your inner universe, the Great Void). Scottish witchcraft is, above all else, an ancient craft of mind, body, and spirit based in nature and aligned with the natural cycles. So, the better acquainted you become with the natural world around you, the more confident and effective you will become.

Swein told me that the only book I needed to read is nature's book. He took me out into the wilds of Scotland and showed me how to listen to and connect with the spirits of the land, the elements, the trees, plants, herbs, crystals, and animals. Communication is paramount. To understand how the elements work, you need to experience them—stand in the rain, thunder, and lightning, feeling the power; or sit in the sun or beside a campfire; or swim in open water; or stand on top of a mountain, feeling the winds. When you talk with Mother Nature, she will talk back. You will begin to feel a difference in your well-being. Witches are part of Mother Nature. They are her children of the earth. They know everything comes from the earth, and to the earth they will return. Everyone has the magick flowing through their blood and bones. Those who seek the magick in all things become the magick in all things. Then there is no separation.

I love being in nature, to hear the whispers of the winds, feel the earth beneath my feet, walk along a beach, or sit and meditate in the sunshine. I feel revitalised, well, and whole. It's scientifically proven that being in nature is good for us. When was the last time you connected with nature? Are you reborn in the spring, or feel passionately in the summer? Do you let go of what does not serve you in the autumn, and die to the old and retreat within during the winter months?

When we connect with Mother Nature, following the cycles, she gives us an endless supply of energy and reserves of strength and well-being. Sadly, this connection is wearing thin. Children and adults are spending less time out in the one place that heals. We are the caretakers of this planet and it is our birthright to care for it. We are born, transformed, healed, and reborn just as all things in the natural world are. So, don't let anyone dig at your foundations. Let your roots be deep to overcome any storm. Make sure your trunk is whole and strong by feeding yourself natural foods. And let your branches reach out and up to the endless possibilities that you can create by being a wise woman or man of nature.

Vision Questing

The first time I experienced a vision quest was with Swein in the Highlands of Scotland. I was placed inside a magickal circle and spent the night under the stars with Swein watching on with a fire lit beside him as the watcher. This was my first ceremony, a prelude of many that were to follow. Many cultures practice the art of the wise man or woman escorting their apprentices to a high spot in the landscape in search of a vision, for the purpose of finding out, through a rite of passage, their future purpose and place within their clan. You can choose to seek a vision by spending the day on your own or with a watcher to guard over you and keep you safe, either day or night. This is a wonderful ceremony to bring about your spiritual focus and answers to any questions you may have about your path.

To connect with the elements, nature, and the spirits, take with you a blanket, water, and offerings for the animals and the spirits of the land. You might choose to go to a sacred site, a hill top, or a forest, but wherever you go, please ensure that somebody knows where you are! It requires endurance and bravery, but will bring about a deep connection with the spirits of the land. You will also find that the answers you seek from the spirit world will come to you from nature itself once you silence your "monkey chatter" mind. By going within and really listening, your inner witch will remember and reawaken your deep wisdom through direct visions experienced during the quest. If you are not able to go out into nature by yourself, you can still do a vision quest in your own home.

The following is a guide to talk you through your vision quest at home. Mark this page so you can refer to it when you are ready to undertake this. Read through the information once first, then keep it near you and use it as a step-by-step guide.

Vision Quest Guide

Make sure you will not be disturbed. Go into a room that you feel comfortable in, ensure you feel comfortable, not too warm or cold, and have your BOS handy. If you are able, face nature if it's nearby, or place a plant,

crystals, herbs, incense made of pine or natural wood smells in the room for your vision quest to recreate a natural atmosphere. If you have an indoor water fountain, you can listen to the sounds of the water spirits splashing around, or if you have a CD player or music on your phone that has natural sounds, play that while you are meditating and journeying. It also good if you have a picture of your favourite place in nature in front of you.

Now close your eyes ... Imagine that you are sitting on your own in nature; the choice is yours as to where you wish to be—a favourite place of yours that you have visited before. Take four deep breaths and allow yourself to drift with no thoughts except for your intention to connect with nature and the spirits.

You hear a voice saying, "I have been called to help and sit with you on your vision quest. You have come to nature to heal and to connect with ancient of lands for regeneration and growth. This is a place of intense power that will accelerate your abilities and gifts. Sit here and draw on the quality of air, fire, earth, and water. Feel the energy surge through you from the rocks, trees, crystals, herbs, plants, and animals that surround you. Heal, on every level, bringing you back into balance of mind, body, spirit, and soul as you are reminded of who you are. You are the witch, the ancestor, the wise man or woman, returned. You have the power, you have the gifts—it is time to become all that you are."

Now allow the spirits to guide you on your visualisation. Don't rush this part. Allow the images to form before you, be they places, animals, or mythical beings ... or even visions of yourself fulfilling your purpose. Breathe steadily, keep relaxed, allowing the images to come in and then go out of focus. When the time feels right for you, open your eyes and write into your BOS what you have experienced. Remember, it takes time. You have to silence your mind and allow the spirits of the land, nature, the ancestors, and those who watch over you to reach out and touch you. You may need to attempt it more than once, but be assured it will happen for you when the time is right.

Chapter Tips

This may be the first book on witchcraft that you will read, or you may be a seasoned witch looking at different aspects of witchcraft. Either way, it's important to have a basic understanding of the different paths within this magickal craft. You can draw from the vast knowledge from the Norse, Egyptian, Celtic, Greek, Native American, Voodoo, or any other culture that calls to you. Listen to your inner wisdom, not others telling you what you should or should not do. Take the time to focus on your connection with the divine and with the deities of ancient belief systems that call to you. Seek out teachers who have learned Scottish witchcraft firsthand—don't just rely on books. Wisdom is earned, knowledge is learned. I personally define Scottish witchcraft as an oral tradition, earned from years of lived experiences and not by doing a weekend course or by reading a couple of books and then proclaiming oneself a "witch," so remember:

- Every wise man/woman is unique. Be individual, be authentic. Don't follow another's path; create your own. Don't let anyone tell you what you should or should not do.
- In days gone by, the wise ones were the healers and seers. They held communities and clans together. So, consider the ways in which you can help your family, friends, and neighbours in today's world; the ways in which you might apply your gifts, knowledge, and wisdom to make this planet a better place.
- Witch hunts were prolific during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As many as six thousand people were tried as witches. How do you feel when you read about the persecutions? Does it upset you or anger you? Perhaps you've experienced a past life as a witch.
- The mistake many teachings and philosophies make is that they fail to teach the student about knowing themselves first and foremost. By doing so, you can increase your personal power tenfold.
- A Book of Shadows is a sacred, personal journal. It should be kept private and only seen by you. It contains the wisdom you have learned and the wisdom you will remember once you pass through the veil of amnesia.
- Make time for yourself to do a vision quest. Take a couple of hours out to connect with yourself, nature, and the powers of the ancestors, deities, and places of power.

[contents]



chapter two

Thresholds and Rituals

aving established a desire to explore the craft and even look at taking up the calling to practice it, one of the very first topics to explore and familiarise yourself with is to understand a little of the worlds beyond the one you know and the ways in which to enter them. A threshold is a doorway between the three-dimensional world we live in and the world of the ancestors and the spirits of the land, sea, air, and fire. This mysterious borderline between the mundane and sacred, when honoured and respected, opens up to us, if we so choose, an incredible journey that will forever change our lives. I will share with you now one such time that I crossed a threshold and the impact it has had on my life since.

"It's time, lass," I heard Swein say as we arrived at Clava Cairns near the Culloden Battlefield. My heart was beating hard against my chest as my mind whirled around with chants and rituals. It was not easy to remember all the words I would say at the threshold to the cairns. I was always able to speak my words out loud from my heart for ceremonies but was supposed to remember words for ritual, and for them to come from my mind was not an easy task. With my arms full of offerings, we stood at the threshold of the ancient site. I could see the ancestors approaching me to ask why we were there.

Swein nudged me gently to speak and so I began, "Ancestors, guardians, and gatekeepers of this place, I ask permission for us to walk upon your sacred land." Silence fell as I watched them walk around us. Suddenly the wind picked up and swirling leaves danced around us. "Thank you, spirits of the land, for your permission to enter," I beseeched them. Silence fell once again as we placed our offerings at the gateway to the cairns. I stood with Swein as, one by one, each person who had joined us for the ritual asked permission to cross over the threshold. Once everyone was within the burial site, our guardian of the threshold, named Ian, stood guard to ensure that nobody would enter. We proceeded to the centre of the cairns to place our gifts on the ritual stone for the ancestors and deities of the land. It was the eve of Samhain and we had come to this ancient site to celebrate and connect with the ancestors who had once lived here.

The moon was floating gracefully on the horizon with wisps of clouds painting a collage of dancing moonbeams shining down on the burial mounds. The mists caressed the stones into picture-perfect form. I could breathe once again, knowing that my work was done for the moment. With arms outstretched, we invoked the ancient ones, calling on them to come forth as we created the boundary lines to keep unwanted energies out. Shadows danced on the stones as the setting sun disappeared behind the hills that surrounded us. With his staff, Swein walked around the cairns, casting the circle and calling out to the four quarters as he placed a person at each quarter to be the gatekeeper, facing outward and depositing the salt that looked like a luminescent white cord on the ground. Once the circle was cast, the remaining people, including myself, were led from the circle and placed at various gateways around the cairns. I was led to the northern burial cairn and was instructed to sit with my back against the stones in the centre of the cairn and to draw my legs up tightly to assist in the transition to the other worlds.

"It's time to cross the threshold to the world of spirit," Swein said to me, "to discover and connect with the ancient ones." He then placed a hag stone around my neck and, with his words ringing in my ears, he left me to face the unknown. The dusk drew in as a damp mist clawed at my bones. I wrapped my cloak tightly around me and closed my eyes. Instantly, images appeared of painted warriors running toward me with claymores (Scottish variants of the basket-hilted sword) and targes (round shields) that caused me to take a sharp intake of breath. I was thrown backward into a tunnel, grasping at the edges, trying to hold on for dear life. I cried out for help as I descended into the void that was rapidly swallowing me up. I heard a deep voice saying, "Don't be afraid; we will not harm you, for you sit upon ancient ground that is sacred to us. Here beneath you lie the bones of your kith and kin. We have heard your invocations to us."

Then, suddenly, in front of me appeared a dark cave. "This is the cave of the ancient ancestors," I heard a collective of voices saying as a kaleidoscope of animals, human figures, spirals, and handprints danced before my eyes. Transfixed, I watched as the scene unfolded in front of me of the journey they had taken to reach this place. I saw people of many races and colours living together in harmony. I was attracted to a distinctive drawing of a handprint with a spiral in the centre of the palm. Then I heard them say to me, "You will travel around the world visiting the sacred sites that have been placed as gateways to the other worlds. Here you will find what you are looking for."

I watched scenes, in my mind's eye, of the battle that was fought only a mile from the cairns. It was as if I was a part of this battle, for I could feel the claymore and targe in my hand. Suddenly it felt as though I was struck from behind, as my knees buckled and I fell to the ground. A crowd surrounded me, and as I looked down at my body, I was without my right leg. (Years later, I was to experience the same vision when waking up from having my right knee replaced with a metal knee. The first thing I saw when waking from the operation was a vision of me lying on a battlefield with no lower leg!) Next, I was thrust forward through a wall of bodies, bones, skulls, and weaponry and then forced upward back to my world and reality. As I opened my eyes slowly, still spinning from the experience, I saw Swein stroking his beard whilst leaning on his staff in front of me saying, "Well lass, did you meet the ancestors? Did you get the answers you were looking for?" The rest of my time at the burial site was a blur. I was still seeing visions of what had happened on the Culloden Battlefield all those years ago. It was not until much later in my life that I fully understood the meaning of the visions I was gifted.

Today I have a metal allergy that was caused by my knee replacement. It is slowly poisoning my body. When I tracked back into the vision that I had, I saw myself slowly dying of infection from the sword that had cut my leg off. History will not repeat itself, because I was given this vision of recapitulation back then to fully understand what to do in this lifetime. I had stood on the threshold of time and entered into a whole new unseen and forgotten landscape. We had created our boundaries and cast a circle to journey to the lost wisdom and knowledge left by our ancestors. It was a moment in time I will never forget, for it was to shape my destiny forever. You see, the single most important aspect of our work in whatever tradition or path we follow is the crossing over of the threshold into the other worlds. Many people walk blindly into sacred sites or ancient buildings without respect or knowledge of how they should approach a threshold. Crossing a threshold is an ancient rite of passage that was taught to me by Swein as an initiation into opening the doors of spiritual transformation, which is what happened to me at the Clava Cairns near Culloden Battlefield. Now I share this aspect of the craft with you so that when the time comes, you too can cross the threshold correctly.

Crossing a Threshold Guide

Set your intention for the purpose of your journey. Ensure you are psychically, emotionally, and spiritually prepared. Wash or cleanse your physical body with water, be it in a shower, a bath, sauna or sweat room using steam. The ancients in many lands had bathing and sweat room areas for purification at the entrance of sacred sites to ensure everyone was cleansed before entering. Purification with oils, incense, mugwort, and sage before entering into the sacred ground is also advised. If you can, place a trusted friend at the threshold to protect you. It is so important to have a link to the earth plane through someone who holds the energy for you and your link to the earth.

The ancestors and spirits of the land will know you are coming, so prepare a spirit plate or a gift to place at the entrance of the sacred site. Stand at the entrance of the site or building you wish to enter. State your intention to the ancestors and spirits of the land or place, then watch for signs from the elements, the animals, the whisper of the trees and flowers around you for an indication that permission has been granted. Once within the sacred place, be mindful of where you walk and how you approach altars and inner sanctums. Be respectful of others, regardless of what their intentions are. Once you have finished your rituals and ceremonies, give thanks; do this by slowly walking around the perimeter in a sunwise (or deasil) direction before exiting out of the entrance as you say thank you. Always leave, if you can, the way you came in. If this is not possible, as you leave from another exit, be mindful of crossing and ask permission to leave. Do not leave any rubbish. Take with you what you have brought in. If there is any other litter about, take it with you too.

I have seen many accidents in my travels around the world where people have not respected ancient sites. I've witnessed people falling over invisible walls and walking into doorways that are not there. The most common things are people vomiting, feeling nauseous, disorientated, out of sync, dizzy, or just plain weird. This is what happens when you cross a threshold without asking. Without having direct connection with the spirits and appeasing them, problems occur! You see, the ancestors moved across continents thousands of years ago, looking for a place to call home, and they would have made offerings and asked the spirits of the land through augury to be allowed to settle with the place of their choosing. People would be drawn to places of power such as a river, a mountaintop, and the ocean. Each such place has their own guardians, both seen and unseen. Today, because we are not leaving offerings or speaking to the spirits of the lands and instead polluting it, nature has had enough! People wonder about the increased bushfires, flood, earthquakes, and erupting volcanoes; well, it's Mother Nature's response to our lack of awareness and disconnection from our source.

When the place of power was found to settle, whether it was a sacred site or to make a home, the first people would mark their boundaries to create a threshold. They used boundary stones and markers as protection to keep unwanted visitors out. Folklore speaks of those who moved in a sunwise direction with fire brands to create a liminal space to define their threshold. These transitional spaces served as a bridge between the seen and unseen. Have you ever experienced certain places and felt strange or uncomfortable? Most likely, you are walking across or along a liminal space. These thresholds give us a feeling of being on the verge of something. Yes, it does feel unsettling, but when you start to comprehend and master the art of walking the line, things do change. It's like walking through thick fog, and you can feel the tangible change in the air, on the land, and in

the fire within. I always carry offerings with me whenever I visit sacred sites, ancient pathways, and old buildings.

The Highlanders of Scotland carried fire torches known as sowmacks. They would walk around their homestead and lands sunwise, chanting ancient songs as they warded off the evil spirits and called on the good folk to watch over them. Once this was done, they would cast the torches onto large bonfires on top of the hills to keep the land safe from the faery folk. Our ancestors had very different ways of marking their territories. From sacrificing animals to use the blood to mark and define their boundaries, to shooting arrows, throwing axes, or regularly riding around their land on horses to define their farm or home, they kept unwanted people and spirits out. Today, hardly anyone knows, understands, or respects what thresholds and boundaries are. They are places of transition that hold sacred meaning to those who know. When we tread onto these sacred places, we need to have a healthy respect for what we are entering. A threshold can be used to refer to a metaphorical doorway to another world, or the bottom-most part of a physical door, or a boundary/dividing line between two or more areas.

I recall a very important time in my life when I learned firsthand what a threshold was. I was in Egypt on one of my first visits over thirty years ago. I was with a group of friends and we decided to spend the day in the King's Chamber in the Great Pyramid of Khufu, also known as the Pyramid of Cheops. I happily climbed up to the entrance of the Great Pyramid with my friends behind me. When I got to the entrance, I turned around to see how my friends were doing and found them vomiting and tripping over stones. In that moment, I had a flash-back to a time when I too was struck down. It was my first visit to the Great Pyramids. I was in my late twenties and I was with my two Sekhem Reiki teachers. When I arrived back at our hotel, I was suddenly struck down and felt as if my heart was being torn out of my chest. My teachers took me into my bedroom; they understood what was happening and told me that my heart was being placed on the goddess Ma'at's Scales of Justice. In those few moments, I experienced a metaphysical occurrence. The room was full of bright blue lights, and as I lay there gasping for breath, I heard a voice say, "Your heart has been weighed; you may enter." Of course, then I did not know what I know now, but it changed my life.

Back in the Great Pyramid of Khufu, looking at my friends lying on the stones, I recalled that day with my teachers and fully grasped the concept of thresholds and boundaries. That day is forever etched in my mind when I travel to places of power, where thresholds call to our ancient souls, to remember to talk to the spirits of ancient lands before entering sacred portals. Now when travelling, I carry seeds for the birds, food for the animals, and flowers, sage, and tobacco for offerings, all depending on where I am in the world, to placate and communicate with the spirits who are still very much alive.

You see, our human adventure begins the moment we are born and enter into this world dotted with thresholds. We have a choice to either cross them and open the doorways or not to cross them and keep the doorways locked. When we placate the guardians and gatekeepers of these worlds and step over the threshold, we enter into a deeper upstanding of our life purpose. Each of us can choose to be the hero or heroine by facing our deepest fears and stepping over the threshold. This is when the adventure begins. We encounter tests, challenges, and adversaries. You may find their Achilles' heel or you may meet your nemesis, as part of the adventure, who will challenge your boundaries and teach you how to walk between the worlds. You will be asked to surrender to all you have learned and known, to enter into another world, or to face your fears. But these stages always herald a new phase in your life.

One ancient tradition is to carry a bride over the threshold. There are many stories connected to its origins, but one tale speaks of family demons who would follow the new bride (and groom) to the couple's new home. To keep the fiends from entering, the groom would carry his sweetheart over the threshold. And from hence after, the bride was free to come and go as she pleased, without fear of demons. My question is this: Why would demons follow a bride? Old traditions tend to change and twist to distort the truth of the original meaning. It was thought that the threshold of the home was rife with unattached spirits waiting to pounce on the unsuspecting bride! By carrying her over the threshold, instead of her walking herself, the spirits could not enter in through the soles of her feet. This custom has been changed somewhat from its ancient Roman origins, known then as the "Tale of the Rape [Kidnapping]of the Women of Sabine." Today, we have a different type of kidnapping that occurs in our lives—people who step over our personal threshold and take away our personal power.

When we, as practitioners of the craft, set our intent to create sacred space, we are in effect creating boundaries, seen and unseen, to hold and contain energy and form. This act of psychic protection is a shield that creates a protective barrier from unwanted energies. As we invoke and build up the concentrated energy within the circle, the boundaries put in place contain this energy as the cone of power is raised. There are various different ways of creating a magickal circle. Each way is unique and sacred to the practitioner. I will now share with you what Swein taught me, and later in this chapter you will learn how to create your own.

To create this circle, I had to first place a shield of protection around myself. Taking my dirk or athame (a small dagger or knife that is suitably cleansed and only used by you), I start with holding it in my hands, left hand over right, as I am left-handed. Always ensure your prominent hand is on top. Facing north, raise your dirk or athame above your head for above, then point it downward to earth, then back to the middle, then draw a line as you walk to the east quarter. Repeat this at all the cardinal points until you return to north. Then kneel down with your dirk or athame and touch the earth whilst drawing up the energy from the earth through into your heart

centre. Once you have done this, then raise your dirk or athame to the skies and draw down the energy through your arms to your heart. Seal the energy of both the skies and earth within your heart centre as you repeat the following words:

Let nothing or no one bring harm to me as I call to the mighty powers that be. Shield of protection, I call to them, to all directions. So mote it be.

I ask you now to really think about which thresholds you might hesitate to cross and why. It could be something that triggers base fears of something like the dark, guilt, grief, or even death. Perhaps the threshold is willing you to experience more positive things in life, but past experiences prevent you from even hoping for these things to be possible, like joy, happiness, trust, and loving relationships. Take a few moments to think about these emotional thresholds. So, imagine you are standing at a threshold, a doorway to another world, to another possibility. What would happen if you crossed the line? Now ask yourself how stepping over this threshold could change your life. When you change, everything changes. When you step over that doorway, you release old habits and conditionings placed upon you by others. It's time to redefine your boundaries and put firmly in place a threshold, a doorway to your desires.

Once you have comprehended and worked with crossing the threshold of your own personal power, you will have a deeper understanding about what a spiritual threshold is and how you can cross it without any problems for yourself or others. I cannot overestimate how important it is to ensure that first and foremost, before you start working with the magickal powers that be, you must fully comprehend the importance of the gateway to the Great Mystery, the realm beyond ours where all is revealed, and that it is to be approached with respect and humility. Many people have crossed over thresholds without a true mastery of how the mystery works. This is the same with boundaries. They are set in place, sometimes for thousands of years, to shield the place of power from unwanted energies, or to seal in undesirable forces that need to be contained. Swein had talked to me about Boleskine House, opposite Loch Ness. He had been invited many times by the then-owner, Edward Grant, to visit it. Swein had a great interest in the most famous of owners, Aleister Crowley, telling me stories of this master occultist and ceremonial magickian and how amazing he was, contrary to what is written down by others.

In 1972 I left school to the sounds of Alice Cooper singing "School's Out." I decided to ride my bicycle to Loch Ness and explore Boleskine House, now owned by Jimmy Page of Led Zeppelin. The hairs at the back of my neck were standing up on arrival. I was scared. The gates were closed. I decided to go around the house, but I could not get in. No matter how I tried, crows would suddenly appear and fly straight at me. Were they protecting me from going in or were they protecting the house and land? As I stood back and surveyed the lands, I heard a disembodied voice urging me not to enter. "These lands are protected, and a boundary has been set up to keep strangers out!" I had been in haunted castles, seen lots of things, ghosts included, but this was different. The powerful forces that surrounded and permeated the house were forceful indeed. This was my first real experience of a forcible energy holding and creating an invisible yet tangible boundary between the worlds.

When we are working with boundaries, both in a metaphysical and spiritual sense, in our rituals and ceremonies, we need to ensure that we have a deep comprehension of the workings of boundaries in our everyday world. If we cannot set them in mental, psychical, and emotional well-being, we will have great difficulty developing them in our craft work. We all set boundaries around our homes with walls and fences, but when it comes to ourselves, our castle gates are left wide open. You need to protect your kingdom, your sacred space. Setting appropriate boundaries stops inappropriate people from being destructive and causing havoc in your lives.

Many people have boundary issues, and if this appears in your life and manifests as a fear, this will impact your day-to-day and magickal lives. Scottish witchcraft is about releasing your fears so that your boundaries are firmly set in place in all areas of your life. The chieftain of his castle knows his boundaries and his weaknesses but so too do his enemies. The first thing people do if they wish to harm or disempower you is to find out what your Achilles' heel is. It might be related to your health, your work, or your personal life. If your boundaries are firmly in place, nothing and no one can hurt you.

A very important thing to remember is that boundaries do exist both here on the earth plane and in the spiritual worlds, and they do affect us in our day-to-day living. I remember many years ago being told to take care of my kingdom. Those words stayed with me for many years as I tried to figure out what Swein meant. Then one day the penny dropped. We are the lord and lady of our own kingdom, and if we do not regularly maintain and secure our boundary walls on all levels of existence, our walls will come tumbling down all around us. So how can we protect our kingdom?

Personal and spiritual boundaries need to be set in your day-to-day living. By doing so, we make sure that we have a healthy respect of our self-worth and will not let others define us. To stop others from manipulating, abusing, or violating us, we need to set up and define our own personal protection. Many people today have not a clue what a personal boundary is. They let anybody into their personal energy field without thinking of the consequences, like using a computer without a firewall. By separating and detaching from other people's feelings and thoughts, we establish and separate who we are as unique individual beings. To set your own

personal boundaries, you take responsibilities for who you are and take control of your life, not allowing anyone else to dictate how you speak, think, or act, as long as your integrity is intact. Instead of deriving your sense of worth from others, you show those who have weak boundaries themselves that they cannot overstep into yours.

It's important to understand that this is a two-way interaction. What you give out and what you receive is an energy exchange that needs to be balanced at all times. By reclaiming your personal power, you can then apply it to your craft work. When we create a boundary in our personal and spiritual life, we define our relationship with others and the world of spirit. In our physical life, we create sacred space around us to keep us safe, and when this is applied in our spiritual life, it creates a vortex of protective awareness both above and below, within and without. When we apply our boundaries to our mental well-being, we stop the inner critic of ourselves and the opinions of others that affect our day-to-day lives.

Now you are ready to create your magickal circle.

Creating Your Magickal Circle

Your personal and spiritual circle can be cast indoors or outside. The space required needs to be large enough so that when you stand in the middle of it you can comfortably stretch out both arms and spin around 360 degrees without being impeded by anything. It's important to choose a time that feels right for you. Visit the place you wish to cast in beforehand ensuring it feels comfortable for you, away from prying eyes. Ensure you will not be distracted while working; being disturbed during your craft work can be upsetting and dangerous if in the middle of a ritual. Bathe before undertaking this ritual and dress appropriately (or take the appropriate clothing with you: cloak, cape, specific outfit that you feel comfortable in and that carries suitable energy for the work you are about to undertake).

For creating your circle outside, you will need:

- A besom or broom
- Offerings for the spirits of the land (birdseed, petals, whatever feels right to you)
- Salt, sand, chalk, crushed egg shells, stones, or cord (to physically mark the circle)
- Your dirk or athame (ceremonial dagger or knife)

Begin by clearing the area you will be working in so that there are no obstacles in your path that can trip you up; use your besom, or broom, to sweep away any negative or stagnant energy, as well as the odd stray twig or leaf. If you are working within a sacred site, ask permission from the guardians of the land and site to hold your ritual there. Prepare a simple altar from the materials around you and give offerings to the spirits of the land. Check that there are no thresholds already created in your chosen space that would allow unwanted guests! Now the time has come to cast your circle. As you don your robes, place great awareness on the meaning of each piece and the energy they hold.

As you stand on the threshold of your magickal circle, become aware of the spirits of the land. Make another offering to the guardians of the land you stand upon. This is the threshold between the sacred and the mundane, and by stepping over this, you enter onto sacred ground. Once you feel that this has been accepted, and with your dirk and enough of your circle-marking material, walk into the middle of your place of power, noticing the energy that you are creating. Taking a handful of your marking material in each hand, stretch both arms out, and slowly release a steady flow of the material from either hand while spinning around 360 degrees.

Now, bringing your arms down, stand firmly in the middle of the circle, planting your feet. You are the connection to the three worlds, and when you can visualize yourself as the Tree of Life, your *axis mundi*, rooted and grounded in place, you are ready. Take your dirk and face north.

At this point, the choice is yours. Working with the elements and directions is a very personal thing. It's whatever feels right for you. Every tradition and every culture has a different way of working. The following is how I work with the directions within my tradition of Scottish witchcraft.

Standing at the gateway to the north, you call upon Beria, the Cailleach, queen of winter, and mother to all the gods and goddesses of Scotland, goddess of life and death, by saying,

Hail and welcome within the circle of life.

Now move to the east, facing the rising sun, and call upon the faery folk, the ancient supernatural race who live beneath the surface of the earth. Welcome them by saying,

Hail and welcome within the circle of life.

Next, walking to the south, call upon the ancestors who once walked upon the sacred land and remember all those who have gone before you. Welcome them into the circle by saying,

Hail and welcome within the circle of life.

Then walk around to the west and stand and call to the guardians and gatekeepers who live between the worlds. Welcome them into the circle saying,

Hail and welcome within the circle of life.

Finally return to the centre of your circle and call on all those who have come into your circle to protect and keep safe Mother Nature. Ask for protection for all living creatures who breathe the same air as you do. I have called upon the gods above, the fae below, the ancestors below, the guardians and gatekeepers above, to protect and keep safe the beings who live on the earth, the spirit within all things.

The circle is now complete; walk out the way you came in and be sure to clear up everything. Your offerings and marking material can be left to recycle or decompose so long as they are 100 percent natural. You can now continue about your way, knowing you have established a most honourable and respectful connection to all that spiritually sustains and protects you. You can also return and repeat this ritual whenever you feel it necessary.

For creating your circle indoors, you will need:

- · A besom or broom
- Herbs, incenses, or oils (for space clearing)
- Chalk, stone, or cord (to physically mark the circle)
- Your dirk/athame (ceremonial knife or dagger)
- Offerings for the ancestors (picture, dried herbs, flowers, your choice)
- Small altar to the ancestors (or bring one into the room from elsewhere)

Begin by clearing the area you will be working in. Clear your space with herbs, incenses, and oils. You can also use your besom, or broom, to sweep away any negative or stagnant energy. Ensure that there are no thresholds already created in your chosen space that would allow in unwanted guests! Place your altar in the room. Now the time has come to cast your circle. As you don your robes, place great awareness on the meaning of each piece and the energy they hold.

As you stand on the threshold of your magickal circle, become aware of the spirit of the pentagram of ancestors (explored in the next chapter). Make an offering to them. This is the threshold between the sacred and the mundane, and by stepping over this, you enter onto sacred ground. Once you feel that this has been accepted, and with your dirk and enough circle-marking material, walk into the middle of your place of power noticing the energy that you are creating. Taking your marking material, stretch out your arms and slowly spin around 360 degrees, marking out your circle with the chalk or placing the stones—whatever you have chosen.

Now, bringing your arms down, stand firmly in the middle of the circle, planting your feet. You are the connection to the three worlds, and when you can visualize yourself as the Tree of Life, your axis mundi, rooted and grounded in place, you are ready. Take your dirk and face north.

At this point, the choice is yours. Working with the elements and directions is a very personal thing. It's what feels right for you. Every tradition and every culture has a different way of working. The following is how I work with the directions within my tradition of Scottish witchcraft.

Standing at the gateway to the north, you call upon Beria, the Cailleach, queen of winter, and mother to all the gods and goddesses of Scotland, goddess of life and death, by saying,

Hail and welcome within the circle life.

Now move to the east, facing the rising sun, and call upon the faery folk, the ancient supernatural race who live beneath the surface of the earth. Welcome them by saying,

Hail and welcome within the circle of life.

Next, walking to the south, call upon the ancestors who once walked upon the sacred land and remember all those who have gone before you. Welcome them into the circle by saying,

Hail and welcome within the circle of life.

Then walk around to the west and stand and call to the guardians and gatekeepers who live between the worlds. Welcome them into the circle saying,

Hail and welcome within the circle of life.

Finally return to the centre of your circle and call on all those who have come into your circle to protect and keep safe Mother Nature. Ask for protection for all living creatures who breathe the same air as you do. I have called upon the gods above, the fae below, the ancestors below, the guardians and gatekeepers above, to protect and keep safe the beings who live on the earth, the spirit within all things.

The circle is now complete. Walk out the way you came in and be sure to clear up everything. You can now continue about your way, knowing you have established a most honourable and respectful connection to all that spiritually sustains and protects you. You can also return and repeat this ritual whenever you feel it necessary. This ritual serves as a wonderful introduction to the three fundamental elements of Scottish witchcraft, which I invite you to now explore in detail, namely grounding, centring, and shielding.

For a witch to build up his/her personal power, it's important to understand the three basic principles for building a solid foundation, which are: grounding (being stable, firmly rooted in what you are doing, being in control), centring (being energetically balanced, healthy, sustained, and spiritually connected), and shielding (protected; physically, mentally, and emotionally robust), collectively referred to here as GCS. These principles are an essential part of preparation for rituals, spellwork, connecting to spirit, and your psychic abilities. They are also important in your everyday life in helping you to feel calmer and in control. In many Pagan traditions, the first thing taught is GCS.

It can be likened to the ancient warriors who formed shield walls. The shield walls were used up until the twelfth century. First of all, the warriors had to ground themselves, making sure that they were low down and solid. Then they centred themselves together as a group, interlocking their shields. They were a formidable force of protection once they had practiced and learned to work together as one. The same applies today when working with GCS. The first thing we do is ground ourselves.

Grounding

It's important that you have a connection with Mother Nature by taking off your shoes and walking barefoot on the earth. We can ground ourselves by taking walks, sitting with trees, and becoming one with nature. It also helps to eliminate any excess energy that we build up when doing our rituals and ceremonies. When we practice "earthing" by walking barefooted, it gives a feeling of well-being. Scientific studies show that it improves pain management, reduces inflammation, diminishes fatigue, and improves sleep.

When we wear shoes made of rubber or plastic on the soles, we are disconnected from the earth's electron flow. These free electrons are nature's biggest antioxidants and help neutralise the damaging free radicals that our bodies are subjected to on a daily basis. This relationship between us and the earth is vitally important. The more of us that connects to the earth by walking and grounding, the more the earth responds.

As a working medium, I am constantly having to ground myself after a mediumship demo or ritual. It's a wonderful feeling to be on high, but we need to come back to earth slowly and not with a bang. A healer's first lesson is to ground. If they don't ground or earth, it can cause built-up residue that can floor you if you don't know what to do with your tingling hands, headaches, and pressure in your spine. The act of grounding any residue energy stops you from depleting your energy. The closer we come to Source, the higher spiritual energy we obtain. This high frequency can burn us out if we are not careful. Our homes have electricity running through them. Within the electrical circuit board is an earthing conductor that directs all unwanted energy though the grounding cord into the earth. Our plugs have an earth wire to protect us and our electrical appliances. Our homes are wired up to discharge, but we are not.

Grounding is about discharging energy. I always carry crystals with me to absorb excessive and negative energy, particularly black obsidian. Other crystals that are good for grounding include black tourmaline, black onyx, jet, smoky quartz, and hematite. In my shop I also have a very large black obsidian ball as protection from the energies of strangers. When I do ritual or ceremonial work, I always have a small bucket of earth outside the circle, used to ground people if needed. If someone has overblown their circuits, I get them to lie down on the earth face up, connecting their spine to the earth. A quick way to ground yourself is to simply but forcefully stamp your feet on the earth. A very enjoyable and fulfilling alternative is to eat a good solid meal. Carbs are really good if you work a lot in the magickal world, as I do. You can also use sage, mugwort, or sandalwood to ground yourself by smudging. I find a bath with rock salts is a fantastic way of earthing myself. And for all the animal lovers out there, pets help us to ground and centre ourselves too! Why not try the following tried-and-tested visualisations—one of the oldest and most effective ways to ground yourself, especially if this is your first time.

Becoming a Tree Visualisation

A wonderful visualisation or meditation to help you ground is to become a tree. This also connects you to the lower worlds, which we will be working with in depth later in this book. It is time now to go out into nature. If you have a favourite tree, then go and sit with your back to the tree. Close your eyes and visualise any excess energy going into the earth. Feel the strength of the tree and ask for help grounding. If you do not have time to go out into nature, another way to quickly earth yourself is to visualise that your feet are rooted to the earth. Then see your excess energy flowing through your roots into the earth. Feel your roots going deep into the earth. Feel the solidness and strength. Feel the ability to give and take without being uprooted. When you are ready, open your eyes.

Centring

Centring helps to balance your spirit and soul within your physical body. This is a wonderful way to draw energy to you and into you, for the beginning of your magickal energy work. If you are already practicing meditation and visualisation, this is a great stepping stone in your work with centring. If you are not sure where the core of your energy lies—solar plexus or heart, for example—or if you cannot easily distinguish your energy from energy around you, then centring is a wonderful way of focusing your personal energy and power within you. It helps you to get in touch with your emotions, thoughts, and creativity, and helps you gain perspective. I find singing

helps me centre myself and connect with the music of my soul. Centring and grounding helps to balance your spiritual and everyday work. It brings together mind, body, and spirit in a harmonious state of being.

As an exercise, go to place in your home or garden or somewhere out in nature where you will not be disturbed. This needs to be a sacred space for you alone. Choose somewhere to sit quietly, upright. Now close your eyes. Visualise that you are being cleansed under a waterfall or swimming in the sea, or imagine that you are being cleansed by warm rain in a warm climate. Feel your energy field cleansed and clear. Now take four deep breaths; this will help you relax. Now once your breathing is slower, focus on a light within your centre of power. It can be any colour you choose. As you breathe inward, see the colour expand throughout your body. Keep doing this, then say to the powers that be:

Show me my witch within.

Observe what happens. Now keep saying this as you expand your energy field from within, to surround you. How do you feel? Do you feel the core of your personal power? Now visualise a pentacle in front of you. As you focus on this symbol of power, call on the elements one by one into your energy field. Feel the power of each element flow into you. Keep breathing deeply as you charge and energise your entire energy field. Once you feel you have centred enough, give thanks to the powers that be. Repeat this every day until you feel fully centred and your personal power is topped up.

Shielding

Finally, we come to shielding (also known as a form of protection). The energy you have created and built up as your personal cone of power in your centring exercise is now expanded to surround you and protect you when working on creating your personal shield. Shielding is used when protecting yourself from psychic or magickal attack.

The way of defending yourself is by using your mental focus to direct energy as a shield around you. Your imagination is your greatest tool in this process. You can use a white light, or a cloak of invisibility, just like Harry Potter. You can wear symbols and alchemical signs on your person to intensify your shield. Think back to how the soldiers protected themselves. They had shields with their personal symbol on them to ward off evil and protect them from ill harm. The Celtic shields had the Celtic knot as a symbol for protection. Their shields signified bravery and strength. Take the time to think about when you might wish to protect yourself. I reinforce my shield first thing in the morning and last thing at night, before I go to sleep. I have my own method of psychic protection and shielding, and I present a visualisation exercise for you here:

I want you to go to a place where you feel safe in your home. Ensure it is a sacred space by cleansing and clearing the room of any negative energies; the simplest way to do this is to either smudge it using sage or clear it using sound vibration (i.e., use a rattle, bell, or small gong). Make sure the only material belongings in the room are those that belong to you. Anything belonging to anyone else may have ethereal cords attached, so remove them (remember to bring them back after the exercise). Once your room is cleansed, it's time to begin. Sit down and imagine you are drawing on your energy core and expand it outward to cover your whole body, just like you did in the centring exercise. This time however, see this wall of power turn into a reflective mirror surrounding you. That way, anyone sending you negative energy or ill will will be sent back to the person directing it at you. Another way of working with psychic protection is visualising yourself in a suit of armour. Make it as light as possible, but at the same time, strong. Keep this image in your mind for as long as you feel necessary; be aware of how this makes you feel. When you feel suitably protected, rise gently and go about your way, knowing you can now call upon this feeling and vision whenever you need to.

Once you start working with GCS, navigating life becomes easier. You may want to start your day focussing on centring or you might prefer to ground to ready yourself for your day's work. I start off with shielding myself first thing in the morning. Then I will focus on centring myself to be ready for the day ahead, which keeps me balanced and focused. At night time, I ground myself and reinforce my shield before I sleep. The art of this foundational work is to make it second nature and blend it within your day-to-day life and spiritual work.

Chapter Tips

Scottish witchcraft, like all forms of traditional "crafting" and shamanism, is rooted in a strong and respectful connection to the natural and spiritual worlds. Therefore, understanding and practising the basics (i.e., crawling and walking before running and flying) is paramount. At best, your experience of the craft will be muted and limited; at worst, you can do harm to yourself and others if you fail to grasp or neglect these lessons, so remember:

- Always ask the ancestors, guardians, or gatekeepers for permission before crossing over the threshold of their sacred land. And always thank them for allowing you to enter and cross over the threshold.
 - Give offerings/gifts to the spirits and deities of the land before stepping onto their sacred space.
- Ensure you are psychically, emotionally, and spiritually prepared for undertaking journey work. Prepare your physical body by washing and cleansing it in a shower, bath, or steam room, and set your intention for the purpose of your journey.

- If you are journeying alone, ask a trusted friend to act as a "watcher" at the threshold. They will protect you and be your grounder for your journey. They are your link to the middle earth that we live in and will ensure that you cast a circle of protection before calling on the four quarters or elementals, gatekeepers, and guardians.
- It is important to put in place personal boundaries for ourselves before setting boundaries within our craft work. Are your personal boundaries well-established and robust? Learn how to say no and mean it.
- Sacred tools are important to all of us; however, it's important to know that you are the conduit of your personal power. Try and use natural materials from nature and, if possible, craft them yourself.
- Remember you can use natural elements to create a circle such as salt, sand, stones, chalk, or your ritual cord, though you must be able to rub out or remove it once casting has finished.
- One of the most important aspects of magickal workings is centring, grounding, and shielding. It's particularly important to ground, to discharge negative energy into the earth. As children, we play in the earth to ground us. As we grow older, we forget. Earthing or walking barefoot on the earth brings us back into balance. There are many ways to ground yourself—eating a good meal (carbs), smudging, lying face up on the earth, visualisations, or crystal absorption of energies by carrying them, wearing them as jewellery, or having them in your home.

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Working with the Ancestors

Cottish witchcraft is most authentically employed when it is used in service to others and the environment. It was never designed for self-gratification or exploitation. How you use what is taught you is most important, so a big consideration is always about the legacy that you and your work will leave behind. Will your descendants honour you and talk of you for many years to come with respect and love, or will the story of your life be snuffed out like candle light, forgotten and lost, without any memories of who you were and why you came here? Our ancestors made great sacrifices; they experienced torture, starvation, abandonment, and fear. But throughout all of this, they never forgot the purpose of their visions and dreams. This was to ensure a world without suffering so that their descendants would know peace and freedom. Our ancestors fought to create balance and harmony. If we, tomorrow's ancestors, forget who our ancestors are, we become a tree without roots, a river without a source.

Do you know about your blood ancestry? If they were lined up in front of you right now, what would you say to them? Would you thank them or would you reject them out of fear or lack of understanding about why they did what they did for future generations? The Scottish ancestors faced great hardships and strife. Families were torn apart and sent to the four corners of the globe. Most were forced to leave Scotland between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, losing everything they owned. The rebellion of 1745 and the Highland Clearances played a big part. For personal, social, religious, and economic reasons, our Scottish ancestors left their homelands for Australia, Canada, and America. Many others left to escape persecution and hardships placed upon them by others taking their traditions, customs, and music to distance shores, but many did not survive the long journeys. Most likely your ancestors had a very hard life. All you need do is look at history to see the hardships they endured.

There is a wealth of genealogy online. With a press of a button, you can now find out your family tree. I was gifted this information by Flavia and was very taken by the findings. My father's side is traced through Scotland and Ireland to Scandinavia and Siberia. My mother's side is through Ireland, Eastern Europe, Spain, and Morocco. What is even more interesting is that my house is filled with pictures and artefacts from these countries without me even having been aware of my genealogical connection to these places. You see, all of us, to some degree or another, are walking in our ancestors' footprints, even though we may not be aware of it. Though I did not realise it at the time, when I stood on top of the Atlas Mountains in Morocco, I was most likely standing where my ancestors once stood. I used to sit by a particular gravestone at the Culloden Battlefield as a child, not realizing until years later that the gravestone belonged to one of my ancestors. Sitting there, I was shown many visions of faraway lands. As an adult, I followed those visions and travelled all over the world, connecting with my ancient ancestors who have all passed.

In today's society, death is still a bit of a taboo subject. Rarely spoken about, except in hushed tones, we tend to avoid the subject. Yet every day thousands of people on earth are dying without assistance or support of loved ones. Scared and frightened, they live out their last few hours in the fear of the unknown without anyone to assist them "home." Our ancestors knew of a different way—of dying well. The cunning men and women of the craft known as "sin eaters" lived within our communities, helping those whose time it was to pass over. Their role as healers and facilitators was to remove the sins and fears of those in transition of the betwixt and between. As they sang the dying person's soul back home to the Isle of the Blessed, they were honouring a legacy passed from generation to generation, as old as time itself.

Within many indigenous cultures and traditions, there is a rite of passage called "living through your death." This personal initiation helps each individual face and overcome the fear and terror of death ritually, so that each person can come to terms with the process of death with no fear. This rite of passage is fully supported by the elders of the tribe so that dying is no longer feared. Many other tribes and clans from around the ancient world revered death. Their realistic approach of integrating death and dying with everyday life, through storytelling of myths and legends, created a bond of unity and remembrance without separation of life and death. The warriors of the clans and tribes of our ancient British Isles knew it was an honour to die well on the battlefield with no fears. Because of their deep knowledge of the cauldron of rebirth and its magickal properties, they could face all adversities and foes knowing that they would be revived. They believed in reincarnation and the Otherworld, known as the "Summerlands." This magickal place is the resting place between incarnations, without pain, fear,

sickness, or death. Can you imagine being raised on these stories, knowing that when you did die in the physical form you would either be revived by the cauldron of rebirth or go to the Summerlands? You would have no fear of death. Today, our ancient rituals and rites of passage for death and dying have been lost in the mists of time, awaiting their rebirth. Only in the remote lands do these sacred rites of passage still take place.

Scottish Folklore of Death and Dying

Within Scottish folklore live tales and fireside stories of the ancestors who came from overseas, who invaded the lands and integrated their own beliefs, deities, and folklore with all that existed. The Picts, Celts, Romans, Vikings, and Saxons shared their traditions and philosophies on death and dying alongside that which the original Scottish people worked with and believed in. The Scottish ancestors viewed the dead in primarily two ways. There were the "peaceful dead," those who had died of natural causes like old age or dying in their sleep. Then there were the "restless dead," who had not died in a good way, suffering sometimes horrific deaths from murder, suicide, childbirth, burnings, drowning at sea, madness, and disease. Then there was the fear of the faery folk or sith, when it came to death, believing they would carry off the dead, mind, body, and soul. To this end, those who committed suicide, considered to now be restless souls, would be buried at a crossroads after having a stake driven through their bodies to ensure they could not rise again. Perhaps this is where the story of vampires having stakes through their bodies originates. It was also customary to have a death heralded by the sound of bells, the wailing of the banshee, or dogs barking in the middle of the night. Other animals such as roosters, crows, or owls that would call out at unnatural hours also were a sign of a death nearby.

From the moment of death until the burial, there are many customs in Scottish culture, like the body being watched over for eight days. Whoever watched over the body was told to touch the deceased with their hand to ensure they did not dream about them. This is interesting because in my tradition of witchcraft, it's important to touch the deceased so that they can come in the Dreamtime and speak with us. A lock of hair was also taken and sometimes part of the cloth was used as a shroud or blanket as a link to the deceased. The hair would be placed in a locket or kept in a box with other personal items as a keepsake of the loved one. The one thing that kept with funerals since burials began is the feasting and drinking. The Vikings feasted, drank, and danced as they ushered their dead into Valhalla. I have attended many Scottish wakes where whiskey, food, and dancing are integral to honouring the dead. It is also customary after the burial that bread and water are placed in the room where the deceased is laid out. The belief here is that if the food is not left out, the dead will not rest. Many other ancient cultures buried their dead with food and drink, and sometimes even with other people, to assist them to the afterlife. The most important thing of all in dying is to have a good death.

One night when I was just a girl, as I lay in my bed at my great-granny Winnie's house, surrounded by spirits, I heard the sound of wailing. It was a woman. I got up and looked outside my door, but there was nobody there. I went back to bed. It happened again and again. Then my great-granny came out of her room. She looked at me and asked, "Did you hear them?"

I nodded. "Who are they?" I asked, but Winnie didn't reply, she just went straight to my great-grandad John's room.

A few minutes later, she came out, teary-eyed. "Go back to your room and stay there. Don't come out until I call for you," she said. With that she went downstairs and out the back door.

I went back to bed feeling very strange and dreamt of my great-grandad walking through the fields and meadows. He looked at me and said, "I'm happy, I'm home now." I felt at peace as he wrapped his arms around me

I was eventually woken by loud noises of men and women talking in the hall downstairs. They came upstairs and went into my great-grandad's room, then back downstairs into the parlour and front living room. Winnie came into the room with a bowl of porridge and explained, "Your great-grandad has died. What you heard in the night was the banshee calling him home." She then went on to explain that the banshee are the women of the faery mounds, solitary spirits of Irish and Scottish mythology. Many people hear them wailing (or keening) before the death of a loved one or family member. The faery woman would sing a dirge (or lament) when someone was about to die. In Scotland, the banshee is the "washer woman" who would wash the bloodstained clothing of those in battle who were about to die, living alone as a death messenger, sometimes with just a scald crow seen alongside her.

As I sat on the bed crying, Winnie looked at me and said, "He's not dead to us; he will still be with us. I have to go out, but can you stay here and answer the door to anyone who might be paying their respects?" I had never seen a dead body, so I was very upset at the thought of seeing him.

Winnie led me down to the front parlour where great-grandad John was laid out. He looked very peaceful. "He's not dead," I said to her, "he's sitting in his favourite chair smoking his pipe."

Winnie smiled at me and replied, "Yes, he is waiting."

"What's he waiting for?" I asked.

"You will see," she replied as she walked out the front door, leaving me alone with him.

As I started to talk to him, there was a loud knock on the door. I came out of the front parlour and there stood this old and haggard woman bent over with a cane in her hand. I was astounded to see the most amazing bright

green eyes. Her hair was grey with black strands throughout, loose and wild. She reminded me of the Cailleach who had visited me so many times before.

She started speaking to me in a deep Irish accent, in a soft, lamenting voice. "You heard them in the middle of the night."

I looked at her, mesmerised, and said, "The wailing and the screaming, is that what you mean?"

"So you have the gift! Winnie told me you had; now I can see it for myself. Now get away with you; I have work to do."

At that point, Winnie came back and greeted Jessie, who asked her for the death linen and my great-grandad's best suit. She washed and clothed him while singing a strange song in an unfamiliar language. Then she was gone, and in her place came all the family and friends, each one with a story of how he had made a difference in their life. There were tears and laughter as I watched my great-grandad's whole life unfold in front of my very eyes.

There was one man who came in and made me feel very uncomfortable. He was dressed in black and looked like he had the weight of the world on his shoulders.

"Who's he?" I asked Winnie.

"He's the sin eater," she replied. I had goose bumps and a shiver ran through me, making me feel very dizzy. I noticed that my dead great-grandad was standing up in front of this man at one end of the coffin and the sin eater at the other end.

"What's he doing here?" I asked her.

"Taking away your grandad's sins," she replied, and with that she ushered me out of the room very quickly. She went back in with a jar of something and some bread. When I kept asking what was happening, she would not reply and avoided my questions. I found it all very strange and creepy.

After three days of prayers, drinking, and feasting at his wake, his family and friends left. It was at this point that his spirit left the room. As I said goodbye to him (he'd been sitting in spirit form in his favourite chair the whole time, except for when the sin eater came in), I noticed loads of letters inside his coffin. These were "papers of regrets" from those who felt they had not said their proper goodbyes to him. By writing their feelings and thoughts down, they had closure and completion, assisting him on his journey to the Summerlands without having ties to the earth plane because of unfinished business. Winnie came in to say her goodbyes to him, and then they closed the coffin.

As they took his coffin outside and placed it on a horse-drawn black carriage, I noticed the street was full of people whom I had never seen before. He had owned the corner grocery store and people from all over the neighbourhood had come to pay their last respects. Suddenly all the women in the crowd walked forward accompanied by Jessie, who stood in front of them, beside the coffin. They all started making a strange sound. As the horse-drawn carriage drew away from the front of the house, the women started wailing and singing just like the banshee I had heard. I was suddenly transported to another time and place. I was in Ireland, watching a scene of hundreds of people around a funnel pyre, wailing. I could see swords and shields and an old man on top of the pyre. Then I heard an old man saying, "This is the end of the line."

Instantly, I was transported back to the house and street. I walked back into the house and went directly to the hearth to seek comfort and solace. I watched the fire dance in the hearth as I reminisced on times gone by when my great-grandad had taken me to the meadows and fields behind the houses. He told me of the stories of Ireland, where he was born, and how he had grown up learning from his mother. Those days were magickal to me. As I sat there, I revisited what I had experienced and seen during the day. It had shaken me to my very core. That night when I went to bed, I was to dream of ancient clans and faeries on the Emerald Isle of Ireland. It was not until much later on in my life that I would understand what I had observed—a way of learning without books, firsthand, and handed down from kith to kin.

And it was only later in life I was to finally understand about "sin eaters" through my now departed friend Ross Heaven. He wrote many books on this fascinating subject. He was an apprentice to a sin eater called Adam Dilwyn. Adam was the local healer in the village and removed negative energies from patients. He was shunned by many as a mad man and a witch and yet he helped hundreds of people. Ross's spiritual memoirs tell of his work with this amazing man who taught him about the lost art of sin eating, meeting the faery folk, and working with the weather, nature, and healing. Ross had a high regard for this man and learned many things from him just as I did from Swein. Both Adam for Ross and Swein for myself helped us to bridge a gap between the seen and unseen, to understand what was happening in our lives as teenagers growing into adults.

A sin eater's role is to take away another person's sins—a heavy responsibility indeed. In Scotland between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, people hired sin eaters to eat of a piece of bread placed upon the dying or dead person's breast to absolve them of their sins. These sins were unconfessed or unforgiven sins that the person had committed. They would hire sin eaters, as with the case of my great-grandad who died unexpectedly and did not get a chance to confess his sins. Sin eaters would either eat bread and drink a beer that was placed upon the dead person, or they would wave bread over them and eat it so that they would digest the sins of the dead.

Each village or community would have had a sin eater. This was, however, not seen as a respectable job and carried stigmatisation and isolation with it. What's interesting to note is that at a wake a lot of drink and food is

consumed by family and friends celebrating the life of the person who died. I believe that this custom goes much further back in time. The perception of it has changed from seeing sin eaters as "cursed" and "cast-out" to a perspective where nobles and royalty give food to the poor in exchange for prayers for their family or friends who have died.

I remember when I visited Mexico and visited Teotihuacán; I saw a picture of Tlazolteotl, the Aztec goddess of fertility, motherhood, and the earth. She would appear at the end of a person's life so they could speak to her of their sins and wrongdoings and she would rid them. The root of all of this is that another would take away your sins, much like Jesus in Christianity, who takes away your sins if you repent. In today's world, I feel it is important for each one of us to work through our misdemeanours before we pass over. It is our personal responsibility to forgive and forget and let go of what no longer serves us. This way, we can go to the Summerlands free from guilt, shame, or blame. The choice is ours: do what you will, but harm none.

The rites of passage for death and dying in ancient cultures and traditions, up until very recently, were always supported by those who understood and knew how to transit through the veil of death. It was deemed sacred to assist and be in the presence of one who was dying. This was due to the spirits drawing close as the veils became thin for those transiting to the Summerlands, assisted by their loved ones on the earth plane and those in the spirit world. This coming together of heaven and earth was done with the greatest of respect, honour, dignity, and forethought. Most people within the theosophical, Pagan, witchcraft, and Wiccan traditions believe in the Summerlands; it is a personal experience and one that I have encountered three times now.

Many who walk an earth-centred path experience firsthand death (not literal but spiritual or emotional) and rebirth many times within one lifetime. With each death and rebirth comes an awakening and death of the ego's self-importance. People can go through this process without knowing or comprehending why it is happening to them. It's known as a "little death" because a part of our soul is reconnected with Source. Throughout the process, there is a stripping down of the physical, mental, and emotional bodies, which assists in dying to the old self-limiting belief patterns created through grief and trauma by others. This process makes way for their belief systems to be rewritten, very much like a computer that is constantly needing new software updates to function correctly. If this is not done on a regular basis, the old programming will become infested with bugs and viruses, shutting the entire network down.

Often those who experience the profound near-death experience or death and rebirth totally change their thoughts and feelings about being a part of this world. The Balams, who were the priests of the Maya, defeated death over and over again so that they could bring back the wisdom from the spirits who resided in the Summerlands. By acquiring the "jaguar body," they were able to journey beyond death and return to the land of the living. This is much like our ancestors, who—once they attain a good death and reside in the Summerlands—may seek to still communicate with us and be part of supporting us in this life. We hold these lines of communication open primarily through the act of active remembrance.

Do you take the time to connect to your ancestors, to those who live on in the Summerlands? Each year on Armistice Day, millions of people stop what they are doing to remember those who fought in the world wars. What we tend to forget is those who died for us long before that. All the people who were burnt as witches, all the people who died in all the wars because of religious beliefs or a lack of them, all the First Nation tribal people all across the globe who were wiped out for the sake of possessing lands, and so it goes on as millions of ancestors have been lost and forgotten by those whom they fought so hard to protect. Imagine if you could travel back in time and connect with any of the ancestors for help and advice. What do you think they would say if they could see what has been done today?

In the Celtic lands, we practice a tradition called Samhain, commonly known worldwide as Halloween. At this time, we honour the departed souls of those who have gone before us. From October 31 to November 2, we move through into our new year with the memories of our loved ones, remembering the impact they made in the lives of the living. Also, in Mexican and Filipino traditions, they celebrate the souls of the dead on November 1. Indigenous peoples and cultures from around the world honour their ancestors daily through ritual and ceremony.

In the "Feeding the Dead" ceremony was an intricate role of the Scottish witch; they oversaw the burial ceremonies. In the Highlands, people recycled their dead by laying out the body. They invited the birds, animals, and the elements to consume the flesh and free the spirit. Samhain was the time when traditionally the living honoured the dead, and again the wise person was instrumental in these celebrations. It was a time to feast and a place was always set aside in the home for either the passed ancestors or for Mother Nature herself. Feeding the dead was part of a daily ritual that involved giving offerings, celebrating, and decision-making, which all included the deceased. The ancestors were honoured by those who walked the path of the Old Ways, as many still do today, to continue on the circle of life. The Egyptians followed an ancient custom of digging up their dead, washing them, and feeding them, as do many other tribal communities in Indonesia. Many of these cultures live with their dead as well, honouring them as ancestors who still live on to teach them and work with them. They are known as living in the land of the ever-living ones.

Before the First World War, only the generals were honoured as worthy in battle. The others were thrown into pits or left for the scavengers, both animal and human, to pick upon. It is time to create and honour those who have gone before us. You will gain a deeper connection and understanding of those who created the world we

live in today by working with the pentagram of ancestors, our next topic. It is time to forgive those who thought only of themselves and not others in their quest for a better life. Honour all those who went before us. If we don't honour our ancestors and their memories and achievements, we are in effect slowly killing our souls and spirits; for without a past knowledge of them, we have no future to look forward to.

The Pentagram of Ancestors

The metaphysical connection between the ancestors, the pentagram and the five elements was discovered in ancient Mesopotamia. Our birthright is to once again connect, remember, and reawaken this ancient mastery. Through ancestor veneration, you will discover that those who have gone before you have a vested interest in ensuring their descendants' lines are continued and healed. By circumnavigating the pentagram with your predecessors, you will gain insight into who you are, where you have come from, and where you are going. The ritual you will undertake in your journey to discover your past, present, and future will forge and create a deep bond of honour, respect, and mutual understanding—in effect, you will have healed the timelines of your ancestral past, thereby fostering new beginnings for future generations to come. We start this process by identifying the five ancestral groups as follows:

- 1. Known Ancestors: These are the people known to you with whom you have the most fundamental biological connection—your bloodline. You may only have memories of them from childhood: their voices, the smell of baking in the kitchen, stories told around the hearth on cold winter nights, or watching them sit in a corner smoking a pipe or in their garden or greenhouse. These people pass on great teachings. Some lessons or teachings can be difficult, as a number of our known ancestors have faced our world at war, leaving them with physical, mental, and emotional scars. Most of your fears, pains, and self-worth issues stem from your forbearers carrying the burdens and stress of these hard times. By calling out their names in ritual, they can assist toward healing past hurts. Forgiveness is the key in moving forward so your ancestral lines are cleared.
- 2. Unknown Ancestors: There are also members of your ancestral bloodline that you may have never heard about or known; some may have been deliberately kept secret or written out of your history. Many of these unknown ancestors were the pioneers who overcame hardships, famines, and plagues, or travelled over land and sea to new frontiers totally foreign to them in a search for a better way of life for themselves and their descendants. They gave up land that had been in the family for hundreds of years, clans and traditions left behind as they walked away from all they knew and loved. They were the ones who endured torture and loss of freedom and surrendered their personal beliefs on pain of death. Many surnames were changed to disguise them for fear of persecution by religious fanatics or ridicule by family members. They were cast out from their homes because they were the black sheep of the family. Women were taken away because they had sinned by either becoming pregnant or marrying without the family's consent. The children were given to other families, put into workhouses, or put up for adoption. Many people have unknown relatives in their family tree, shunned and forgotten, waiting to be discovered and reunited. My own mother told me about my real family on her death bed, because she didn't want me feeling alone or lost. Four weeks to the day she died, I had a phone call from my brothers, who had been searching for me for years.
- **3. Teacher Ancestors:** These people, usually completely unrelated to you in the physical sense, come from all walks of life to impart their wisdom and knowledge. Students have sat at the feet of wise men and women listening to their philosophy, dreams, and visions. Like the heroes and heroines from days of old, these are the teachers who have inspired and influenced your daily life in your quest for the mystical and magickal meanings. From poets and musicians to scientists, herbalists, and doctors, the list is endless. These way-showers guide and support your passions and goals. They have spent endless days and nights preparing you for your rites of passage in the many forms they take throughout your life.
- **4. Past Life Ancestors:** These beings are here to help you to tap into your ancestral memories. Within our memory genes and DNA are electromagnetic frequencies that connect with yourself both in this moment of reality and in your past lives. This web of energy holds memories of all our past lives and are also contained within the sacred sites and power sites across the globe. From lifetime to lifetime, we revisit and remember where we have walked before. When we travel to distant shores or visit places that call to us, we are tapping into lost records and recollections of previous lifetimes. In previous lifetimes, you have worked with and been a part of another family, your past life family. Within this family, you have deep connections that reach over time and space, from lifetime to lifetime. How many times have you met someone and already "known" them? How many times have you felt that one of your teachers in this lifetime has been your teacher before? How many times have you felt that the work you are doing now is work you have done before? When we connect with our past life ancestors, we are connecting with ourselves. We are our ancestors, we are the cunning men and women, the witches and wizards who once walked on this land, come back once more to rewrite history and heal the wounds of our ancestors. We have come full circle.
- **5. Ancient Ancestors:** These ancient ancestors gifted us the knowledge of astronomy, mathematics, writing, herbs, healing, and cosmology, to name but a few. These wisdom keepers prepared for us a land of incredible beauty, a real garden of Eden. When we connect with the ancient ancestors, we honour our first teachers. These wise beings included the world of tree people, stone people, winged ones, mammals, creepy crawlies, crystals,

and mythical creatures. They are the link to revealing our true heritage. Whatever path you may walk on today, be it Pagan, Wiccan, Druid, or any other earth-centred tradition, know that you are walking with these amazing ancestors. When you combine their teachings with your philosophies, you do this on a soul-to-soul level. By calling on the ancient ones, you are calling the spirit of all made manifest in this world and in all other realities; in effect, the global consciousness of all that has been created—past, present, and future as one.

Now I want you to imagine a sacred space where you can create an altar for your ancestors to visit you and speak with you. This altar honours your bloodline, clan, teachers, all those who have gone before you. Here you can step between the veils of the mundane and spiritual worlds. You can ask questions, find out your bloodline tracing back thousands of years. As a child I sat beside that gravestone on Culloden Battlefield. I felt at home with this clan. It felt peaceful and comforting. When I felt sad or alone, I always went to this gravestone. And it wasn't for many years that I discovered they were my blood ancestors. No longer were they my unknown ancestors. Through adoption, I had lost my connection to my blood family and yet I had intuitively known and been drawn to be with them. They had called to me and I had answered. Your ancestral altar is another way of finding lost relatives if you are adopted or have been fostered out or have lost contact with family members. All you need do is ask your blood ancestors to connect with your unknown ancestors to help find them.

Creating a Living Altar Exercise

You will need:

- Besom or small broom to sweep the space
- Small table or shelf (base for your altar)
- Material to cover the base of the altar (usually something belonging to an ancestor)
- Herb of your choice for purifying the space (i.e. mugwort, sage)
- Vessel/dish to contain the smoking herb (your choice, abalone shells or small wooden salad bowl are popular)
- Feather or handheld fan of some sort, or even a photo or drawing of the ancestor to disperse the smoke
- Photos, personal items such as a tobacco pipe, books, music, jewellery of deceased ones that you wish to call upon; this can also include pets
 - Earth, sand, or gravel from the lands of your ancestors if possible, even soil or dirt from the graveside
 - Magickal tools such as a small cauldron, bell, athame, or charm
 - A candle
 - Empty picture frame
 - Figurines to represent the ancestors
 - Flowers (optional)
 - Favourite food(s) or drink of your ancestors

First, create and cleanse an area in your house for your ancestral altar. It can be a shelf or a small space, even better if it is in the living room or kitchen. The reason for this is that many of your blood ancestors will have spent a lot of time in the kitchen, like my great-granny who casted her spells and made her lotions and potions in there. It's a place of familiar association. It's important to separate your ancestral altar from other altars, for this altar is for those who have passed to the Summerlands. It's important that where you place your ancestral altar is not distributed and can be left for the spirits of your ancestors to gather, for you to talk with. Try to ensure that it is not touched by others and that you do not place any pictures or memories of anyone still living on it.

To clear the area you've chosen, use your besom if you have a small one for your altar, then herbs or incenses to smoke out and cleanse negative energy and create sacred space, and as you do so, say the following:

Ancestors of blood and bone,
I call to thee to gather home.
A sacred space I will create,
so together we may celebrate.
A living altar of ancestral memories,
together as one, our special energies.

Now that your space for your ancestral altar has been cleared, you can place on your cloth the photos and personal items such as a tobacco pipe, books, music, and jewellery of the deceased ones that you wish to call upon. Don't forget the photos of your pets who have passed away as well. It's also good to have earth, sand, gravel, or stones in containers of your ancestors' lands or even the dirt from your ancestors' grave. Favourite flowers of your loved ones is a beautiful way of remembering them, and the smell connects you to your memories of them.

Then place, if you wish, your magickal tools such as a small cauldron, bell, or athame. These will be used later on when working with the pentagram of the five ancestors. Also place on your altar a picture frame that is empty to represent your unknown relatives. You might find that you want to place pictures of places or unknown people on your altar as well. Trust what you are given by the ancestral spirits. You may also find that you are called to place figurines on the altar, representing unknown ancestors.

Last but not least place your loved ones' favourite food on the altar, making sure no animals can get to it. Replace the food and water or spirits if your loved ones had a favourite tipple. If you can, remember to light a candle on your ancestral altar every day to help and assist you throughout your life and as you call them to you to help and support you, say:

I light this candle in honour of [person's name].

Once you have created your ancestral altar and have worked with it for a couple of months, you might wish to work with each of the five ancestors separately. I would suggest doing this on a full moon, blood moon, Samhain, Beltane, or Yule. If this is not possible, try to work close to an esbat or sabbat. Saturday is also a good day as it is the day of the ancestors.

The Pentagram of the Ancestors Ritual

You can choose to work with any number of groups of ancestors. If you wish, for example, to find out more about your past life ancestors, then just focus in that area after first honouring the other ancestors. All you need to do is light the candle representing that area and direction. It is important to change the water, food, and flowers to ensure they are fresh. Working with your ancestral altar is not just for Samhain; it is a sacred gateway to the Summerlands, one that is important to maintain to keep your connection with the ancestors. Now I will take you through the process of working with the ancestors of type and direction.

• Blood Ancestors of the North: On the northern part of your altar, place photos of your loved ones, items of jewellery, perfume, or personal items. I have my mother's hairbrush and perfume on my altar so I can still smell her. It's important to use these items to stir your senses and hold the memories when working with them. Also place a dish of earth or container of sand or soil from your blood ancestors' lands for the element of earth. Once you have done this, place a candle in the north and say:

Ancestors dear of blood and bone, from earth you have to spirit flown.
Let's cleanse past hurts of yours, now mine, that flowed from you like ancient wine.
Ancestral lines now heal at last and break free from the chains of past.

• Unknown Ancestors of the East: In the eastern section of your altar, place incense or herbs with a container or holder. Place a feather to direct the smoke from the herbs or incense in the direction of east. Also place on this area a representation of a family tree. It can be a photo or picture or even a small statue of a tree. Also place facing east a picture frame with a picture to represent your unknown ancestors. This is stating your intention to discover your family's history. Once you have done this, place a yellow candle in the east and say:

Whispers carried through the air, reaching out to whom is there, those of mine, I call you home, no longer to be felt unknown.

Piece together missing parts, complete, and place deep in my heart.

• Teacher Ancestors of the South: In the southern section of your altar, place books, music, letters, poetry—words or music that have inspired you throughout your life. You can also place personal items from your teachers that were gifted to you when they were alive, photos of them as well. Here, place a separate candle to represent the element of fire. When you have done this, place a red candle in the direction of the south and say:

Through fierce flames step my guides, protecting me through life's rough rides. Teacher spirits walk with me; I welcome you and honour thee. The fire is stoked, our passions blend, as you assist me to transcend.

• Past Life Ancestors of the West: In the western part of your altar, place soil or earth from the lands you once walked upon; also here you can place statues of deities of the land (for example, if you had a connection in Egypt, you would place statues of Egyptian gods and goddesses in this area). Also place photos of places, sacred sites, or temples that you feel a connection with through your past life ancestors. Also place a chalice filled with water in this direction to represent the element of water. Once you have done all this, place a blue candle in the direct of the west and say:

From the powers of the west, memories call, the water blessed. Remembrance flows deeply and vast, souls connecting from the past. Lighting up my path today, to Know Myself—for 'tis the way.

• Ancient Ancestors of Spirit: Here, in the centre of the altar, place your cauldron, athame, or spirit bell. Here you will place all your petitions to the spirits. Also in the place of spirits, you use your athame to direct energy and cut ties from unwanted ancestors. Here you place food and drink to feed the spirits and also flowers. In front of the cauldron, place a white candle and say:

From the centre of the star, I call the spirits near and far. Of earth, water, air, and fire, to learn from you is my desire. Ancient truths upon this hour, consume me as I stand in power.

Chapter Tips

We are the living tree between our ancestors and descendants. Our ancestors are our past, the roots and foundations of who we are and where we are headed. These roots need to be healed and honoured for our roots to stay strong and solid. We live in the middle world as the trunk that supports both the roots and the branches of our descendants still to come. Our descendants are the ones of our hopes, dreams, and aspirations. When we combine our ancestors, ourselves, and our future generations to come, we are in effect ensuring that our blood lines live on. This is their spiritual journey as is ours. For their actions and lives helped create and shape our own. The ancestors live on forever with your prayers, thoughts, connections, and focus. When we no longer honour our ancestors, they are no more. So too do our hopes for our future descendants to come, for we are tomorrow's ancestors. To survive, we must tell their stories so we shall not forget but remember:

- An ancestor, be it blood-related or passed down through rites of transmigration, is someone who has died a good death, having practised and transmitted to his descendants wisdom and knowledge that was passed on to them. They will have been a peacemaker, a sacred link nurturing kinship between the living and the dead through prayers and ceremonies.
- Familiarise yourself with all your ancestors; blood ancestors are our loved ones who we may or may not have known in this lifetime; unknown ancestors are those who we did not meet in this lifetime but are of our blood line; teacher ancestors can either be known to us personally on the earth plane or can be our spirit guides and helpers in the spirit world; past lives ancestors are here to help us to tap into our ancestral memories; and ancient ancestors are the first of all our kinds, residing in spirit who can help us to cut ties.
- Within Scottish witchcraft, our ancestors are honoured by keeping their memories alive through various forms of communication and ritual. Consider how you keep the memories of your ancestors; do you think of them often, talk to them, even have an altar for this purpose?
- The warriors of the clans and tribes of the ancient British Isles knew it was an honour to die well on the battlefield without fear. They believed in reincarnation and the Summerlands. Think about your beliefs about the afterlife; explore how you too could metaphorically "die" to old fears and be reborn in this life. Consider how you feel about death in the physical form.
- Many of you will have heard of the banshee. They are the women of the fairy mounds, solitary spirits of Irish and Scottish mythology. Many have heard them wailing or keening before the death of a loved one or family. Have you had premonitions of someone who is about to die? Did you dream it or have a vision of it beforehand? Have you ever heard the banshee?
 - It's important to separate your ancestral altar from your other altars.
- Place on the altar some cloth, photos, and personal items of the deceased person/pet. Also, place in containers earth, sand, gravel, or stones that are from your ancestor's land.
- Light a candle each day to honour both yourself and your ancestors and to connect you all together as one family.
- You can work with the five ancestors separately on a full moon, blood moon, Samhain, Beltane, or Yule. Saturday is also a good day, as it's the day of the ancestors.
- Working with the five ancestors is called ritual of the pentagram of the ancestor; blood ancestors of the north, unknown ancestors of the east, teacher ancestors of the south, past life ancestors of the west, ancient ancestors of spirit. Work with it for a more profound understanding of those who created the world we stand on.
- When you work with the pentagram of the ancestors, you will forge a deep connection with those who have gone before you. Try to spend at least one day a week communicating with them. By remembering that you are tomorrow's ancestors, you can create a path of wisdom for yourself. This is the craft of the wise.



Spirits of Scotland

t was a beautiful autumn day as I cycled along the road to Dores on Loch Ness. I had once again been forced to attend church for the harvest festival and was glad to get out and be in nature. I was happily freewheeling down the hill on my bike when a field on the right-hand side of the hill caught my eye. It had not yet been harvested and I wanted to explore.

As I walked through the field, I could see a flattened circle and was immediately drawn to walk into the centre. I had never seen anything like it before. I could feel the winds blowing gently around me as I lay down in the corn field. I looked up at the clear blue sky as the birds flew around me and I could hear the drone of the insects lulling me to sleep. I closed my eyes, feeling safe and secure, when suddenly I felt as if I was being pulled upward into the sky.

The next thing I was aware of was standing on a platform on the edge of the waters of Loch Ness. I looked down at myself and noticed I was wearing strange clothing. Around me, people were fishing in strange, round, shiny black boats. I heard laughter behind me and turned sharply to see an amazing structure of a thatched round building on stilts on the edge of the loch.

Where on earth was I? I was totally perplexed by it all. I noticed smoke coming from the centre of roof of the round building and fish and meat hanging from the dwelling house. As I looked at the building, I could see the door opening and an old woman coming out, walking toward me. She looked very familiar. Then I remembered. She was the old woman who had visited me many times as a child. As I stared at her face, I could see it changing into many different female faces. "What is your name?" I asked her in fear of who she was. I was scared but at the same time fascinated.

She looked back at me and chuckled, "Call me the old woman." I stood there frozen to the spot. "Come," she said as she beckoned me toward the door. I followed her inside and noticed lots of families living under one roof. "Well you took your time," she said as she walked toward the central fire. Then she took a handful of herbs out of the bag around her waist and muttered a strange dialect I did not understand. The hairs on the back of my neck stood on end. "Sit down," she commanded. This was one old lady I was not going to argue with. She threw more herbs on the fire and beckoned me to sit next to her on the piles of furs beside the fire. "I am going to tell you a story about how your ancestors first came to this land," she announced to me. I was entranced. "We have travelled across many lands and continents looking for a place to settle to make our own. We left clues along the way of where we touched the high mountains. Legends told of our sisterhood as we left our homelands to share our knowledge and wisdom to those who would listen. Here on this land, we found everything we needed: a place to fish and gather berries, trees and stones to build with, seeds that we brought with us from our ancient lands buried beneath the seas, fresh water to drink from streams and rivers."

As I sat and listened to her stories that had drawn all the children in, I saw a side of her that she had not shown before. Every time I had seen her before, she scared me, but now I could see beyond her mask to a goddess/priestess of ancient lands, who had been lost and forgotten by many of those who should be grateful for her gifts throughout all the seasons, not just in winter. Then just as I was thinking about this, she transformed into a beautiful woman. As I was looking at her with my eyes wide open, she said to me, "You believe now; you can see me for who I am. The disbelievers only see what they want to see. If they live a life of ugliness, they will only see ugliness. Once you believe in beauty, you will see and become beauty. Your journey will not be easy, but one day you will look back on your life and will only see beauty."

How long I stayed sitting by the fire with her and all her family I do not know. It seemed like ages, but suddenly I felt a rush of wind swirling around me, and then I was back in the field being shouted at by the farmer. I ran out of the field, got on my bike, and made my way down to the loch. I sat there for a long time looking out at the water and remembering everything I had experienced that day. Was it a dream or had I gone back in time to the land of the ancients? I will never know. What I do know is that my connection with the Cailleach is powerful. I know that she has been in my life guiding me and keeping me safe throughout. She feels like an ancient priestess with magickal powers and a depth of wisdom that reaches back through the annals of time. She has been beside me when I have gone through the dark night of the soul more than once on my journey to discover who I truly am.

Stories abound of the Cailleach in Scotland, in which she has been described in many different forms, such as a one-eyed old woman with horrible red teeth and matted long white hair. She also wore a kerchief and an old plaid shawl. Some of the descriptions of her remind me of a cyclops, with the one eye in the middle of the

forehead. She is the embodiment of winter, which is not to be feared but embraced. She has a blue face and, according to stories, was born old at Samhain. What's interesting to note is that she grows younger as she moves through winter until she becomes a beautiful maiden at Beltane. There are stories as well that state she was a Triune Goddess, though her aspect of the Hag or Crone is her main aspect and one I always saw.

Swein would tell me many Scottish folk stories about her. When I spoke to him about the first experience that I had of her whilst in my bedroom, he was not surprised. He too had a deep connection with her and said she was always visiting him when working for spirit. Swein read to me from the book of Lecan, which is a late medieval Irish manuscript copied from early books. In this story, the Cailleach married seven husbands and fostered over fifty children who founded many tribes and nations around the world. She was also known as a goddess of the harvest, the Grain Mother or Field Spirit, which the locals still believe she is to this day.

Having already been worshipped long before the Celts arrived in Scotland, there are very old tales of her appearing in many different guises. She was seen as the washer by the ford, washing the linen of a solider about to die in battle. If the warrior saw her, he knew he would soon be crossing over the river of life and death to his final resting place. The Picts, Celts, and Vikings relished the darker side of life. The Gallowglass warriors, who were of Norse and Gaelic descent, had no fear of death and knew that to die in battle was an honour. They were fearless in battle because their belief was one of reincarnation. They honoured the wisdom of darkness, so the Cailleach was respected and revered as wise.

From my experiences with her, I feel truly honoured that she has visited me and watched over me. She is as old as the hills; she has travelled throughout ancient lands, helping to teach and sharing her wisdom with those who would listen. She came at last to Scotland to watch over and share her teachings with others. She is nature, she is a veiled goddess. I see her as one of the first humans to walk the earth. Stories abound of her being a giantess, which takes me to the stories of the giants who walked on the earth, of the Nephilim who were the offspring of the Sons of God. Did one of these ancient beings cross the lands and seas to Scotland and make it her home? Once revered as an ancient by our ancestors, she lived among men and women, sharing her wisdom to those who would listen. Slowly throughout the passages of time, the ancient wisdom was lost, and she was forgotten as new religions took hold and changed forever the course of time. Today, she lives in the mountains, awaiting your call for help and assistance. All you need to do is ask.

Here is a message just for you from the Cailleach, taken from my Dark Goddess oracle deck:

You certainly are a survivor! You have been knocked down, but have gotten back up again so many times, you've lost count! The proverbial School of Hard Knocks awards you a gold star for your absolute tolerance and tenacity. Fighting to keep your head above water for so long has been a hard battle, and you are worn down by the struggle. The Cailleach has stormed into your life now to bring about transitional relief. This Divine Hag demands respect, and advises a little caution on your part, but in return she will advise you how to get through troubled times and difficult situations. Life has gifted you with more than your fair share of tough experiences. So now is the time to take your survival skills to the next level and share all that you've come to learn with others who will be inspired by your continued endurance and fortitude.

I have many altars around the house that I share with Flavia. We have a beautiful goddess altar which honours all the different goddesses we work with throughout the year. I also have a personal area where I honour the Dark Goddess and the Cailleach, the first Dark Goddess I met in my life. The Dark Goddess is the embodiment of our shadow self. All peoples across the globe honour variations of her—the Morrighan, Hecate, Kali, for example. The Cailleach is known for her love of the mountains, glens, rivers, streams, and so many hills in Scotland. On my Dark Goddess altar, I have a shrine created as a cave, and deep within the cave is a carving of her. Every night I light a candle to honour the wisdom and teachings from the Dark Goddess who guided me safely home, who looked after me and protected me through the dark night of the soul. If you feel drawn to honour her or any other particular Dark Goddess, you can create an altar for them.

Cailleach Altar Creation Exercise

You will need:

- Tools for cleansing (see chapter three)
- Stones or pebbles from places sacred to you
- · Small bowl of water
- A candle
- Incense of your choice

Once you have selected the items you wish to use to dedicate to the Dark Goddess, build your altar (see Creating a Living Altar Exercise in chapter three and follow the basic preparation of dedicating a space and cleansing it). Populate the altar with the stones/pebbles, include a bowl of water, light the candle, burn incense, and say the following:

Goddess of winter, Mother of night, ancient Crone of wisdom, lend me your might.

Magick hammer in hand, I strike a blow to remove this darkness, so I may go to the well of youth at first light of dawn to drink of its waters, no longer forlorn.

As the wheel doth turn, I see the light through the veil of illusion, no longer my sight.

Dark Goddess, Crone, guardian of wells and streams, who called me to her through my darkest dreams, new beginnings now birthed from her ancient womb, destiny rises as she saves me from doom.

As you call to her, feel the power of the Crone flow through your whole being. Then once finished, dip your fingers in the bowl of water and dab the water on your third eye and hands, saying:

Element of water, wash me clean so I may no longer be unseen.
Out of the darkness into the light, help me, Dark Goddess, to shine my light bright. So mote it be.

Take your time now to write all you have experienced with the call of the Cailleach in your Book of Shadows. How do you see her? Do you see her as an old woman or a beautiful maiden? It's time to remove your veil, as your mask is no longer needed—for out of the darkness comes the light. The overriding experience of this wonderful great spirit is one of bestowing clarity, though many encounter her in very troubling times. She is there as way through these times, not as a force to drown you in your despair. The Cailleach's resonance with water is not a coincidence, as the waters of Scotland are sacred and magickal, life-giving and life-taking, mysterious and revealing—from loch to seashore and all between.

Ancient Water Sites of Scotland

As a child, I loved to visit all the ancient sites of the Highlands. My dad loved driving in his old cars visiting different places. I remember visiting the old wishing well at Culloden Moor, Clootie Well on the Black Isle, and many more. Life for me was exciting and I cherish those early years, before my dad became ill, when we could go out and be one with the land. My dad had always wanted to be a history teacher, but his parents forced him to be a chartered accountant instead. So, on weekends we would venture out and he would tell me all the stories about wishing wells, springs, streams, and healing waters all around us.

Inverness is one of the oldest towns in Scotland. Recorded history dates back to King Brude, a Pictish king from the sixth century AD. *Inverness* means "Mouth of the River Ness." I was always playing in the Ness Islands, where my dad would take me down and teach me about all the different types of trees by making me sit underneath each and tell him what I felt. I remember an old well there and graves too, that are no longer there. The Ness Islands are surround by a fork in the River Ness that runs along either side of the islands and joins back up further down the river. My favourite point was always where the rivers divided. When I left Inverness, I went to the fork of the river and took both the running water and the sand/ground from the point where it forks. This place of power has hereditary magick filled with natural forces.

Life throws situations at us when we are forced to be severed from Source, only to be joined again later on in life. The same is said for two streams or rivers that come together either to flow as one or to go on their separate ways. On my altar of my ancestors sits the water and sand gravel from the River Ness along with sand from Egypt, red rocks from Sedona, and earth from Turkey. Every river was once under the protective care of a deity or goddess in Scotland. Gifts of flowers, fruit, and coins, which must be silver, were given to thank the river for its gift of life. Scotland once had over six hundred wells, including healing, clootie, cursing, weather, and wishing wells. The Highlands of Scotland's springs, lochs, rivers, and wells were regarded as sacred and had the power to heal. The petitions by the people of the sacred springs at their respective source and the placing of cloths at clootie and healing wells had been consecrated and honoured since the early Celts.

Then in the seventeenth century, the Scottish church banned the people from feeding the water spirits and places of power. Many people visited sacred water sites around the Highlands. Many of these sites have now vanished, been covered up, or become lost and forgotten because those who carry on the Highland folklore are slowly dying out with old age. It is a sad fact that the young ones today are not interested anymore in folklore and local history and the days of exploration are left to Google search! I remember visiting St. Mary's Well many times as a child. In those days it had a roof over it, a seat, and a woman who guarded it. You could ask her questions. Today only the walls remain. I have fond memories of going there after church on the first Sunday in May to throw a coin in and make a wish.

Before Christianity it was the custom to arrive at a well before dawn. You would walk around the healing well three times sunwise, then approach the entrance of the well from the east to acknowledge the sun as you threw a coin in. You would drink of the water and those who came for healing would either tear off a piece of cloth from

their clothing or would have brought a piece of natural material so it could rot naturally. The cloth was dipped into the water and tied to the nearest tree. This is why it is known as a "clootie" well. If anyone touches any of the clooties, the illness is transferred to the person touching it. People have also left jewellery and written requests. I have seen so many different gifts left around the wells such as small stones, pins, coins, and crystals. If you wish to leave an offering at a well, make sure they are as natural as possible.

The Highlands of Scotland have had a long history of people going to ancient wells to speak to the spirits of the land to pray to them for healing. The wells' water was thought to be a river to the Underworld and a bridge to the ancestors and the land of Fae. For hundreds of years, pagan traditions flowed alongside Christian beliefs. Then everything changed as churches were built alongside the wells. The goddesses and water spirits were plagiarised and renamed as Saints' names, just like the one in Culloden, which is now known as St. Mary's Well. It happened all over the UK; even our ancient well in Buxton, where I now live, was dedicated to the goddess Arnemetia, the goddess of the water and the grove. When the Romans came to Buxton, they built spa baths at the sacred site beside the thermal waters. This honouring continued until medieval times when the well was changed to become St. Anne's Well. A chapel stood beside the well and it became a pilgrimage shrine. This well of living water is decorated each year in a ceremony and custom of well dressing. The custom of well dressing comes from the root of pagan tradition, to make offerings to the water deities. Today we can still access the well and drink from her living waters.

At many of the wells I have visited around the Highlands, I have seen food offerings. Food is often offered up to the spirits of the well. In older times, it was believed that the faeries were displeased with the food if it was still there when you returned the next day. Traditional healing wells are visited before sunrise. If you are leaving on a long journey, you would petition the spirits of the land for safe travels.

I remember visiting the well at Culloden on a full moon for our rituals. We would place a silver coin or item of jewellery made of silver into the well as we called down Mother Moon. There are those that say that the most auspicious time to visit the well is at the end of the first quarter of the moon phase. Monday is also a good day to visit as it's the day of the moon—"Moon Day." I have also visited ancient wells for rituals on the Sabbats of the year. The most powerful time to go is either first thing before dawn to greet the sun or at dusk when the sacred marriage of the element of water merges with the element of fire, creating a powerful elixir of magickal workings. We used to go as a coven to the well at Culloden for the four major fire festivals. We would arrive with lit torches at dawn, and sometimes at dusk, to carry on the traditions of protecting the land, spirits, and deities so the power would not wane or be forgotten. We would bring figurines of our deities and wash them there too.

Many of the wells that I have visited as a child are now lost or forgotten, or just left to slowly go back to nature. The ancestors who walked onto the land many years ago knew how to approach a sacred well site. They honoured the spirits of the land with offerings such as cakes and wine. They would take ancestral stones from their homelands to connect with the "stone people" of this land. They would honour the stones around the well and leave their ancestral stones beside the stones near the well. I remember the old yew tree beside the Culloden well, which was tied with amazing ribbons of red. All the wells I have seen on my journeys have had sacred trees beside them of oak, ash, rowan, holly, or hawthorn.

One of my favourite wells was in the Ness Islands. Covering it was a weeping willow and you had to know where to look. Once you slowly went in amongst the tree, you found the well coming from a stone. I was only ten at the time and used to hide in the tree sitting by the well, talking to the faeries that lived there. It was a magickal time in my life. The Ness Islands had every tree you can imagine, and it was where I was to learn my tree lore. As a child, I was used to seeing wells and springs around Inverness. Many local people drank from these springs. There was always a metal cup on a long chain attached to the wall or stone. Many of the older people would take the water back home to heal others. I would see people putting cloth into the water for healing, and at Clachnaharry there was a washing burn (stream). There people would go and wash away all their illness. Also nearby was a spring that had been blessed by St. Kessog and was used for protection against the ill doings of others.

Spirits of the Land

One of the first things Swein taught me was about the spirits of the land. I find that many people work with discarnate spirits and totally ignore the ancestors and the local land spirits around them. The reason today that we have so many problems with our weather, all the natural disasters, and the loss of ice is, I believe, down to the lack of connection and conversation with the land spirits.

When I visit Thailand and Indonesia, they have altars and ancestral homes for the spirits. They have a deep knowledge of how the land spirits function. At every crossroad, shop, home, beach, river, and volcano are places of worship and offerings. The people of these lands have a deep connection with the genius loci (the protective spirit of the place). Here at home, I find that the focus is placed on worshipping the deities instead of working with and getting to know the ancestors first, then the land spirits. Do you go into nature and visit sacred sites of the land spirits? Do you take offerings and speak to the spirits of the lands? Have you spoken to someone local who knows the folklore of the land you live upon? Do you speak to the spirits and ask them what they want or need you to do? Do you approach them with reverence and humility? These are all things that, when practising the craft, become second nature.

You would approach them by standing at the threshold, be it a gate into a sacred well or a forest with a guardian tree, such as an oak or a yew tree. You would then gift offerings pertaining to the land you are walking upon. In Scotland I take oatmeal, mugwort, and yarrow. I take seeds for the animals too. As I stand at the threshold, I ask permission to enter whilst listening to the spirits of the land and what they wish for. Each landscape is varied and different, especially in Scotland. From holy lochs to faery glens, it will take some time to get to know the areas. When Swein would take me to the gateway or threshold, he would make me stop and listen. He would ask me what I heard. I would hear whispering in the winds as the trees moved or the plants swayed. As I placed my offerings, I would know that they were pleased at the fact that they were respected for walking on their land. Otherwise, it's like walking into someone's house without permission and sailing straight into the kitchen, eating their food, and then sitting down on their furniture or bed and making yourself at home. That's how it feels to the land spirits.

I remember the first time I took part in a ritual involving ayahuasca in Peru. We were taken deep into the jungle. There we stopped in front of an old altar placed there for the spirits of the land and the spirits of the vine of the soul itself, ayahuasca. It was a powerful place. You could feel everything was alive, not just with the flora and fauna, but as if everything was one. The hum, the buzz, was so tangible, you could feel the electric charge of spirit all around. Here we placed offerings to appease the spirits for the taking of the vine. I have not felt that buzz of the deepest jungle anywhere apart from at places of power where the ancestors and land spirits are still honoured.

Nine years ago, I was in Greece on holiday. The hotel we were staying in had all sorts of problems with the rooms, food, everything. People were leaving every day because they were not happy and saying that strange things were going on, preventing them from sleeping, and that the hotel was haunted. I was fine; I am used to sleeping in haunted places and did not have any problems with the hotel. My room was beside a thick, white, high wall. Everyone else in that block kept moving, so I was the only one left on that side of the hotel. I kept hearing frogs all the time, so I decided to go and investigate. To my surprise, I found an old Greek temple right beside the hotel wall. That was why the wall was so high; the authorities did not want anyone seeing it. It was all boarded up. I walked around the area and saw this beautiful mosaic flooring within the temple. Every time I walked up to the wired fence that closed off the temple, the frogs would go crazy with their sounds. I was clearly not allowed in this temple.

I walked around to the back of the temple and was led to six skeletons bleaching in the sun right beside the wall, on the opposite side of the hotel. I stood at the threshold and asked permission to enter. Silence; no frogs. I walked into the area where the skeletons lay. I felt a deep sadness. These individuals were lost and forgotten. I stood and prayed and spoke to the spirits and guardians of the land. The sadness was overwhelming. I headed back to the hotel and asked them what the temple was. I was informed that there were some three hundred temples still not excavated in Greece due to a lack of funding. The temple was home to a rich Greek general who had come home from the war only to find his family murdered. They told me that nobody went near the place because of the angry spirits. I looked at them in surprise. "Why do think you have problems with the hotel? Have you not thought that the spirits of the land are not happy that you have built a hotel on top of a home? Why are the bodies lying bleached in the sun? Why have they not been given a proper burial?" I asked.

"We have not been allowed to," was their reply. They could not understand why they should do anything about it. They just held their hands up and shrugged their shoulders as they looked at me, perplexed.

The next day I walked back to the site with roses in my hands. I stood at the threshold and asked permission to enter in. I went to each skeleton in turn and did a ritual to help send them to the next life. I placed flowers beside each one along with water and food. The frogs were quiet, and I understood about the guardians and gatekeepers of the lands. I was told by the spirits of the place that the general had come home to find his family slaughtered and his home ransacked. He took his own life. The skeletons of four adults and two teenagers all lying together on this site was heart-breaking. Here was a site where the protective spirits watched over those who had honoured them in the first place. I went and thanked the frogs for their guardianship of this sacred place and asked them to watch over the skeletons. As I left with tears in my eyes for those who had not been given a proper burial, I cried thinking of all the other sites around the world that are lost, forgotten, and not respected for what has gone before. I was to later find out that the hotel had closed down and that the ancient site had still not been excavated.

What that experience demonstrates is that one of the responsibilities we have as caretakers of this earth is to the spirits of the land, sacred places, hearth, and home. Throughout time many cultures believed in spirits, ghosts, and hauntings just like the hotel in Greece. The Romans dedicated altars to the spirits that lived on the land. Within animism, which I love, everything has a spirit or soul. Everything is alive. It's such a shame that today we do not comprehend this ancient wisdom. The Celts who once walked upon the lands of Scotland knew that there was no boundary line between the sacred and temporal. Through prayers, listening, and offerings, you can form a deep bond between yourself and the spirits. Many people take for granted that which they live in. House and home are sacred places and the spirits of the hearth still live in the secluded areas in your home. I am very aware, when entering our home, to placate the spirits who live on, under, or within our home. Our home is built on the ancient pathway to the centre of Buxton. The cobblestones still lie beneath my basement floor. The spirit of Mary the Baker from the First World War still resides here, as does a young boy from Roman times. It is

important to remember that just because you live in your home, that doesn't make it spiritually yours. We have to earn respect from the local spirits who have been here before us. In the ancient times, before building a house, the spirits of the land had to be either driven out, palliated, or integrated into the spirit of the house itself. The Highlanders would walk around the land with fire, asking permission to live on the land. Another ancient custom was to sleep in the house and ask the spirits who resided there if it was alright for them to move in.

Our ancestors, the hunter-gatherers of these lands, had a working knowledge of how to appease the spirits. When looking for a place to settle, they also watched for signs of augury, such as the flight of birds and favourable weather. Then they would ask permission of the spirits of land to settle there. I always wish that I had done just that when I first moved to Buxton. The house was on Knights Templar land, and fights had occurred there. For the two years that I resided there, it was hell. It also had a medieval site on the grounds that had been excavated. Records from the Duke of Devonshire estates show it as two landholders who had been Knights Templars. They had come back to the land situated below Solomon's Temple, which is up on a hill. They had fought for the land and it had ended in carnage. When I resided there, fights between the owner, James, and the farmers in the neighbouring house were frequent. Today the whole site is now owned by the local farmer and peace is on the land. What I saw and experienced while living there is another book in itself.

When it was time for me to move out of the house, I took my sword, a replica of the legendary Excalibur, which had been gifted to me years before whilst I was teaching at the Arthur Findlay College, Essex, and I placed it into the earth on the ancient site of Arnemetia. Then I did a ritual to call on the goddess of the water and grove to come with me to my new home.

I was drawn to a shop with a flat above it in Buxton. It had a boundary stone beside the doorway, there was a besom above the old fireplace, and I absolutely knew this was my new home. I bought it straight away. I had come home. When I moved in, I placed a single coin at each of the four corners of the house for protection. I also placed horseshoes around the building and put Celtic red threaded crosses on the back windows alongside juniper (Juniperus) branches, and placed Brighid's crosses on doors and entrances. I have been living happily in my new home ever since—over fifteen years now. But it has not been without incident. Disturbingly, we had a werewolf living next door to us. Every full moon, we heard shouts, screaming, and abusive words from the other side of the wall. We tried everything from banishment to fiery pentagrams, but it still carried on. We always felt depleted and drained. Maybe he was a wulver, a Scottish werewolf from the myths of the ancient Celts here in Buxton. We continued our banishing rituals until one day he was gone! Suddenly we had new neighbours who were Chinese—amazing!

They stripped the whole house out; nothing was left. When I spoke to my new neighbour, she revealed that she had spoken to the spirits of the home and land, had put a fireplace in, and created amazing feng shui throughout the house. It's amazing how spirit works, for they brought two wonderful people to live next door with a tradition that goes all the way back to their homeland, China, where the art of feng shui was first created thousands of years ago. Who better to clear the house, appease the spirits, and put living altars everywhere? Flavia and I now feel great living with neighbours who honour the spirits of the land, home, and hearth as we do. Different the traditions may be, but the same ancient wisdom from our ancestors who long ago were one tribe, one people, one nation, prevailed. I now ask you to reflect on whether you have experienced problems with your home or the land that you live upon or feel drained when you are at home and do not know why. Do you know the spirits of the land, home, and hearth that live alongside you? When was the last time you spoke to them, gave offerings, or listened to them? Do you have magickal signs and symbols protecting your home? We need to live in harmony with the spirits of the land as well as the home that we live in.

I would suggest you take some time out to connect with them, make offerings, and spend time in your home instead of using it as somewhere just to sleep and eat. You can draw on protective energies as I did too; you don't need a sword—your dagger, staff, or even a protective crystal, like black obsidian, will do just fine. The place that you live in is more than just a shell. Here is an incantation that you can say at own home when you wish to communicate with the spirits:

Ancient spirits of the land,
I call to you to make a stand.
Awaken those who are asleep
and do not remember your great feats
of protectors, guardians of our land
who called to us with sacred plans
to heal the earth and honour you
as you watch over all we do.
Guard this home with all your might,
let nothing or no one escape your sight.
Weave your magick for all to see,
protection in place. So mote in be.

The next part of our journey takes us to the lands and times of the fae of Scotland. Let the magick unfurl; let the stories be told.

The Sith

I loved listening to my dad, Swein, Winnie, and my aunt tell stories of magickal faery folk. I played in faery hills and danced in faery streams as the tales ran deep in my blood and bones, reminding me of days of old. The storytellers lived the magick, became the magick, as they sat round the fires spinning their tales of old over five thousand years of ancient history. The sith, or the "faeries" as most people will know them, come from an ancient race. In many Gaelic tales, the Tuatha Dé Danann, whose name means "the people of the goddess Danu," were a supernatural race who came from the gods. Danu later became Anu or Arnemetia, the patroness of Buxton, where I now live. There are no coincidences.

When I'd ask Swein questions about these things, he would always answer, "Ask the faery folk who live under the earth, in the faery glens and hills, beneath ancient mounds and burial sites." These faery folk, known in Scotland as *sith* (pronounced "shee") were an ancient supernatural race who dwelt beneath the surface of the earth. Much information can found in the *Book of Leinster*, a medieval Irish source. The fae have their own tribes with faery kings and queens in each country or territory. They are held in high esteem as "the gentry" because of their tall noble appearance (think of the elves in *Lord of the Rings* for a better understanding of what the magickal beings might look like). These ancient beings passed onto us the wisdom and knowledge of the earth.

When you listen to the different stories from around the world of how we as humans came into being, we hear the same thing over and over again—myths abound of the fallen angels who were cast out of heaven and became faeries. Ancient knowledge passed to humans from extraterrestrial beings. Incredible! One summer's morning, I could feel eyes upon me as I danced and skipped up the faery hill. My dad was visiting a grave of our ancestors at the top, but I was more interested in chasing the dandelion clocks—to me, they were the faeries traveling to other worlds, far better than visiting graves. I kept telling my father, "They are not here; why are we visiting stones and bones? It's silly, they live in a far nicer place than here."

My father would laugh and say, "You are such a strange one. No wonder we named you Barbara—it means 'the mysterious one.' " He just smiled and told me it was important to remember these times because they hold the answers I would seek growing up. I just laughed. Once we arrived at the top of Tomnahurich Cemetery, known as the Hill of the Yew Trees, and made our way to a very big stone that my dad was interested in, I decided to play hide-and-seek, much to his annoyance. I headed over to the large gravestones at the back of the hill, making sure nobody was about. I could hear my father's voice in the distance shouting for me not to get lost. I saw an opening in one of the gravestones. I was not afraid of dead people. I was used to seeing them all the time at night; they often walked through doors and walls to sit on my bed and talk to me. I crawled into the old cracked gravestone and found a cosy little place where I could curl up and hide from my dad. I closed my eyes and wished I could be with the faery folk. Suddenly I heard an abrupt voice. At first it was muffled, then it became louder. "What are you doing here?" I was asked.

"I'm hiding from my dad," I replied.

"Why would you do such a thing?" I was asked.

"I want to visit the faery queen," was my reply. "She lives in this hill."

"What makes you think she lives here?" said the voice.

"Because my dad told me she does," I replied.

And with that, a funny little man appeared. With his hands on his hips, he looked at me and demanded, "And what makes you think she will see you?"

I replied, "Because I'm one of you and I want to retrieve my magick!"

The little man marched off, with me following close behind. Soon we came upon an old tree and within its roots was a magickal town. It was amazing. I followed him through the town until we came upon a beautiful crystal cave. As we entered, I felt the magick of the place. Then, before my eyes, a beautiful faery appeared. She looked at me, smiling, and welcomed me into this magickal place.

"Are you the faery queen?" I asked.

"Yes," she replied. "I have lived here a very long time and am always delighted when we have people like you visiting our home. So tell me, what have you come for?" she asked.

"To be with those who understand and can help me live in the Otherworld. I don't like it. They don't understand me. I feel so alone and lost. Can you help me?"

She looked at me and said, "You have chosen to live in the world of humans. There are many who you will meet when you are older who will have the same affinity with you, who will also feel as you do. Know that you are not alone—there are many of us who watch over you and will guide you as you grow older."

"Like the old woman who visits me?" I asked.

"Yes, she, and many others throughout your life will come to you with the same understanding." With that, she handed me a small crystal and said, "When you feel alone, hold this crystal and call to us. We will come to you." As I looked into the crystal, all at once I was back in my little space between the gravestone, hearing my dad calling for me. I quickly scrambled out of the hiding place to see my father standing there with his hands on his hips, glaring at me.

"Where have you been?" he shouted at me, "I have been looking everywhere for you! You are filthy dirty! What have you been up to?" I started to explain that I had visited the faery queen but he was having none of it, grabbing my hand and dragging me down the hill.

I wondered, was it a dream or did I meet the faery queen? I always look back on that time with a smile, feeling as though I'm still that young girl beneath the faery hill of Tomnahurich, the hill of the Yews ... and I still have the small crystal.

When I used to go out in nature, my mother would always call after me to be careful to not fall asleep in a faery circle of daisies in case the faery folk took me away. But I wanted to be stolen away from the situation I was in at home, so I would sit in the Ness Islands by the well and pray hard that I was taken. After my experience at the faery hill at Tomnahurich with my dad, I wanted to go home to the faery folk who lived beneath the hills. The wee folk for our ancestors were their friends and helpers, but also taught them not to cross their boundaries or there would be trouble afoot. Swein taught me to pour milk onto the boundary stones during ritual for the faery folk as an offering. I remember the days I would visit Swein, and on the way there my friend's mother, who would drive me there, would stop off at the faery glen and waterfall at Rosemarie. There were two waterfalls and the local children would decorate the water with flowers in the hope that the faeries would keep it clean. We would sometimes stop off at the clootie well near Avoch and the one at Unlochy too.

Another amazing place in Scotland is Doon Hill and the faery knowe near Aberfoyle. Here the Reverend Robert Kirk wrote a book called *The Secret Commonwealth of Elves and Faeries*. He had a great interest in the folk and had many sightings. When he was found dead on a hilltop with only his nightshirt, the locals said that he had annoyed the faery folk by writing the book and giving away their secrets. We know otherwise; it was not the faery folk he had annoyed but the locals who had fabricated the whole story and had blamed the fae. Today a mature pine marks the spot where his soul was taken underground to the faery queen's palace, a doorway to another world. Hopefully his soul is resting there, a place which he honoured and respected more so than his congregation who saw fit to deceive. Today streamers hang from the pine tree and the walk is covered with little faery doors in the other trees that surround his resting place. In many ancient Scottish myths, the wyvern (part dragon, part serpent) is hailed as the guardian of the realm of the Fae. More widely, legends of the wyvern, dragon, and giant worm have been intertwined, and now they feature in countless films and computer games as great guardians or gatekeepers, often protecting the gates to other worlds and realms. So now would be a good time to further explore the intricacies of the elements, their associated magickal beings or elementals, and the directions connected to them, all very important within Scottish witchcraft practices.

Elements, Elementals, and Directions

There are many terms used within magickal circles for opening the four gates or directions. They have been called "casting the circle," "opening of the four gates," or "saluting the watchtowers" within many Neopagan, Wiccan, witchcraft traditions. What's interesting is when I attend open circles and ask people which four guardians they work with at the gateways, most people do not have a clue. They stand, invoking in the lords of the watchtowers, without knowing which beings the high priest or priestess works with. In my traditions, each gateway to Source is guarded by a specific being. Would you like them to guard your quarter, witness what you are doing, or attend to your circle? At this point it is beneficial to get a better understanding the world of the elements and elementals and how they can assist us in our craft.

Though this knowledge of a profound relationship between humankind and our environment (both seen and unseen) has been around for tens of thousands of years at least, it was the Swiss physician Paracelsus (born Theophrastus Aureolus Bombastus von Hohenheim in 1493, one of the most influential medical scientists in early modern Europe) who first argued that the body had to be balanced not only internally but also externally, in harmony with its environment. He travelled all over Europe and beyond as a military surgeon with the Venetian army, mixing with people from many cultures and gaining considerable knowledge of folk medicine traditions. He told doctors to study nature and develop personal experience through experiment, whilst continuing to subscribe to all kinds of folk beliefs such as gnomes, spirits, and faeries.

He went on to classify these beings in accordance with each element: gnomes (earth), undines (water), salamanders (fire), and sylphs (air). Humankind represented the presence of the fifth element, usually assigned to ether. The four ethereal beings Paracelsus introduced to the medical profession are those most attributed today; however, in Scottish witchcraft there are beings specifically from the environment of the islands, as there are specific beings attributed to other lands across the world. They are the guardians of the nature kingdom, responsible for sustaining life on earth alongside ourselves. Their plane of existence is beyond the upper worlds, beyond the astral plane, but lower than the deities. I now invite you to discover the guardians most commonly called upon in Scottish witchcraft and why.

First of these are known as the pech. They are the guardians of the element of earth. These dwarf/gnome-like beings, stout and strong, are said to toil away at the earth, enabling the plants to grow and animals to live on it successfully. Without their help, it is believed we would have no plants or trees, no fruits, vegetables, or salads to eat. Sadly, their job today is a thankless and difficult task. Due to humankind's abuse of the land, from extensive farming and the use of pesticides and other chemicals, pech have to work their magick that much harder because of the depletion of minerals from the earth. Other names for the earth guardians from around the world include gnome, yakshini, brownie, and dwarf.

Next are the elements of air, the sith. These fae folk are said to bring messages through the winds. They help purify the air so that all loving beings that walk and grow on the earth can breathe easily. Without them, we could not exist. Sadly, they too are having to work their magick harder than ever as the air becomes more polluted from car exhausts, factory fumes, methane gas emissions, and even nuclear explosions! Other names for the air quardians from around the world include sylph, kamaitachi, and kajsa.

Then we have the guardians of fire, the wyvern. These half-dragon half-serpent creatures exist in the etheric world until they are summoned to this earthly existence by the form of a matchstick, a lighter, or an electrical appliance. Of all the elemental guardians, these are probably the most feared, but actually should not be so! For if you work with these fiery beings, and respect them and the fire they create, then they will protect you, your loved ones, and your possessions from the ravishing effects of fire itself. Other common fire guardians from around the world include salamanders and dragons.

Finally, we come to the guardians of water, the water sprites. They are wherever water exists, such as lakes, rivers, pools, wells, oceans, and even the rain. In Scotland, we can also engage with the very specific beings of a loch or ocean, where kelpies and selkies come into their own. Their role is to nurture and protect the animals and plants that reside in these bodies of waters, as well as the water itself. Every time you take a shower or relax in a hot bath, you have the opportunity to commune with them and utilise their powers. Each time we drink a glass of water, we are taking their energies into ourselves and communing with them on a subconscious level. They work closely with the sith when it comes to a westerly, wet wind and also with the wyvern during an electrical storm. The water sprites are fighting to keep the oceans clean and clear of pollution from shipping, erosion, and runoff that carries agricultural fertilizers and pesticides, septic fluids, motor oil, and of course plastics. Other common water guardians from around the world include undines, sirens, kelpies, and the merrow (mermaids and mermen).

As the guardians will differ depending on where you live in the world, so does working with the directions associated with them. What you have to decide is who your gatekeepers and guardians of each direction are. This is where it differs in my tradition and craft. Normally, to cast a circle, you work with the elements of earth for north, air for east, fire for south, and water for west. Other groups work with north as air, east as earth, south as fire and west as water. I have travelled all over the world working with different cultures, traditions, circle work, and medicine wheel work, starting with different directions, different philosophies. But in the end, I got totally confused and went back to my original way of working. My suggestion to you is as follows: if you are not sure, don't worry. Follow your intuition, what feels right for you. You will know who to work with, which path feels right for you. Don't let others tell you what you should or should not do. It's your magickal circle; you are casting it. All I am doing here is giving you guidelines to follow. Here are the directions now as I would view them from the Scottish witchcraft perspective.

Connecting to the north relates to the element of earth; it's all about maintaining your logic and common sense and keeping you grounded and stable. The pech, gnomes, dwarves, and brownies hold this energy and are best called upon to reinforce the power on offer. North connects to the season of winter, the time of the new moon and midnight. Gods and goddesses of your belief system are best addressed in this direction.

Connecting to east enhances aspiration, inspiration, and creativity. The sith and sylphs are best to communicate and manifest these with us. East relates to the element of air and the season of spring, the time of the waxing moon and sunrise.

Connecting to the south gives strength and courage and fuels your passion for life. The wyvern, salamanders, dragons, and fire sprites can be called upon for help. South relates to the element of fire and opens the door to both the spirits of the land and the Otherworld. Linked to summer, the full moon, and noon, amplification is granted to all magickal undertakings created facing south.

Connecting to the west direction relates the element of water, governing your emotional well-being and your intuitive/psychic development. You are called to engage with the undines, water sprites, merrow, selkies, kelpies, and fin folk. West offers a strong connection to all your ancestors. Linked to autumn, the waning moon, and dusk, reflection is granted for all ritual work undertaken facing west.

I suggest casting a circle, then standing in the centre, facing each direction in turn. Take your time, close your eyes, and use your senses to feel the differences in each quarter. Remember to focus on which land you live upon. As you stand in that direction, what and how do you feel? There is no wrong or right way of doing this. As long as you state your intention to the deities, ancestors, spirits of power and place, the nature spirits, and whoever else you wish to call into your circle, you can do no wrong. In the next chapter, I will cover two of the great gifts that many witches have learned to manage and employ, especially with the help of their strong connection to and good understanding of the elements, elementals, and directions—the gifts of seership and divination.

Chapter Tips

Spirit, the very essence of the creative force, seen and unseen, was believed by our ancient ancestors to reside in all things, including the land, the waters, the air, the stones, and trees as well as people and animals. This is not unique to the Highlands of Scotland; it is a belief that is felt across the globe and predates all we have come to understand now in academic terms. Paracelsus believed that the art of healing comes from nature not from the physician. Therefore, the physician must start from nature, with an open mind. Many might just call it "energy." But what the spirits of Scotland specifically teach us when it comes to witchcraft is the connection between all

things and the importance of keeping this connection, this knowledge and recognition, alive. So consider the following:

- Have you dreamt or felt a similar experience of going back in time and meeting a manifested spirit that you cannot put into words? Sometimes such an experience in childhood can even direct you toward your life purpose. If so, write about it in your BOS.
- Which goddess do you work with or are you drawn to in your craft? Have you had actual interactions with her? If so, it would be good to make a note of this in your BOS.
- Make time to visit healing wells, the ocean, seas, and rivers. Do you feel connected to the element of water or work with sacred waters from healing springs? Write down in your BOS how the water makes you feel so you can always draw on those feelings when you need to but cannot get to water.
- Make a habit of making offerings to the spirits of the land; this could be leaving bird seed, sage, flowers, or simply reciting a prayer or meditating whilst in nature.
- The reason why we have so many problems today with our weather and natural disasters is the lack of appropriate connection with the land spirits and our total disregard of the land, treating it like a dumping ground rather than a place of nourishment.
- In Scotland, the word for the fae is sith (pronounced "shee"), which is the same as the Irish sidhe. They are the nature spirits of earth, air, fire, and water, though they are most often associated with air. Which nature spirit do you connect with most easily and why? Note this in your BOS.
- The elementals are the guardians of the nature kingdom. Take time to work with each elemental and the element it is connected to.
- Which direction do you feel most drawn to? How do you feel when you stand in the different quarters? Is there any direction you are not comfortable with? If there is, focus your attention on why and work to bring it in balance with the other quarters. Everyone is different when working with the directions. It all depends on where you live on the earth, your cultures, and your traditions. Remember to do want feels right for you.

[contents]



Seership and Divination

ay 11, 2003, is the day that an extraordinary wise man, my teacher and mentor, died. I can see the moment it happened, as if frozen in time and space. I was staying at the house I once lived in just outside of Buxton on the ancient land of Arnemetia, the goddess of the water and the grove. It was a beautiful day and I decided to climb to the top of the hill to connect to the spirits of the land. As I stood on the ancient boundary line from the sixth century AD between the Anglo Saxons and the Celts (Britons), I sensed a profound shift take place. A cold shiver ran down my back and I felt lightheaded. Then it was as if the top of my head had been opened up and all this energy came pouring in. I sat down, overcome with both sadness and joy. It was a very strange feeling indeed. As I walked down the hill, I noticed my friend calling to me.

"You need to call Margaret," she said. "It's about Swein."

I knew right away what was wrong. Before she could say anything else, I said, "He's passed."

"How did you know?" she asked. I told her what happened to me. It was a very sad day for me when the wheel of fortune turned and I took on the mantle and responsibility of the Highland Seer.

I think back now to when I met Swein for the first time, with his long white beard and hair. Standing in front of me was an amazing man who could see and predict people's lives and knew what was going to happen to them. Throughout my teenage years into my late twenties, I spent most of my evenings going to Ceilidhs. Those nights of music, dancing, stories of ancient beliefs, and poems told by the local tale-tellers were a part of my life that I will never forget.

It's also true that Swein's life was not an easy one. For the most part, he was his own worst enemy. He loved his "wee dram" and his women. Every time I visited him with my friends in my teenage years, he always had the ladies around him. Then he married and had two sons. Eventually Margaret came into his life and became his companion.

Working with the gift of two sights is not easy, for Swein was always plagued by spirits both living and dead. He drank a lot because of this curse, as some would call it. Walking between the two worlds and seeing both at the same time is like walking on a tightrope. You have to be in total control at all times. You need to know your boundaries and when to say no. Tradition states that the Highland Seer is given their sight by the people of the other worlds.

I remember telling Swein of my experience at Tomnahurich when I met the faery queen and asking him if it had been just a dream or not. He just looked at me and smiled, saying, "It's okay, lass; all will be revealed in time." Of course, I always wanted the answers there and then and it was the same when I travelled the world seeking answers, as you might have. When I met the shaman medicine teachers in the Americas, they would say, "You already know what you need to know; it's all within." It used to drive me mad. Now in my early sixties, I have a greater understanding and appreciation of the value of experiencing rather than just being told something.

You may well be going through a testing time or have had the most incredulous experiences without having anyone to hold your hand and guide you through them. This journey has many pitfalls from people who belittle you and call you mad or crazy to family that will stop at nothing to ensure you do not follow your soul's chosen path. Everything you have ever experienced is your truth. All of us have different gifts and abilities. It's knowing how to hone and develop them that helps us understand and make the best use of them. To this end, there are many different tools at our disposal, from intuition to imagination; the difficult part is trusting them and letting go of all the brainwashing that society inflicts upon us. It would be wonderful if there was a Hogwarts in every town—then we would not have the problems we are still seeing today with those whose second sight has not been recognised. So many people today who have these gifts are either given tablets to suppress their abilities or made to change their belief system. Imagine what would happen if all the belief systems were stripped away and we were forced to believe only one thing. Life would be so different if we could follow the path we each truly believed in. I was indeed blessed, not cursed, because I had Swein, who ensured I would not lose the gift of seership.

I call the path of the seer "the path of knowing." It does not happen overnight. It takes years and years of working within your chosen field of work—from the learning and understanding of what you are experiencing to applying it in your work. It's not something you pick up and put back down again, it's a way of life. It is the path

of initiation. The most important thing for working with witchcraft is laying down your foundations. You will not be able to jump straight into spellwork if you don't know how to work with and comprehend divination and the magick that lives within it. You need to experience both the power of magick and awakening of your psychic abilities through divination to enhance your inner magickal core.

I remember going to the Arthur Findlay College back in the 1980s to develop my mediumship skills. I had a natural gift for working with the spirits and I thought attending the college would help me. What it did, though, was damage what was naturally inherent within me. It stripped away all that Swein taught me, and like a game of snakes and ladders, I ended up back down at the bottom. Why? Because it was all directed through logic instead of intuition and imagination. It took me many years to unlearn how they had taught and brain-washed me; it was their philosophy, not mine!

There are three memories that stand out from my dreams, premonitions, and visions. I remember when my mother was diagnosed with cancer. I asked my ancestral spirits to show me the date when she would pass. I had never asked this before, even though I knew from a dream when my dad would die. I had visited him in the hospital and he was covered in a white fine mist. I was only fifteen years old when he passed, and I did not know what a shroud was. I had seen a similar appearance when my great-grandad had passed as well, but until I had met Swein, I had no one to explain what things were.

Spirit gave me a date of July 26, so I knew we had nine months. I said to my mum, "Let's travel to your favourite places." We did just that and we had an amazing time—she loved every minute. We spent a couple of weeks in the USA then made our way to Ireland. We were staying in a beautiful castle that I knew would please my mum. We had just checked into our room when she fell in the bathroom. I picked her up and carried her into the bedroom. I knew then that the time was near. She was flown over to Inverness and taken into the local hospital. I sat with her all night, and as the light started to show on the horizon, I looked at the sun and said, "Welcome." Then I looked at my mum and said my goodbyes. The date was July 26.

The second memory is about a vision I had of a work colleague. Every time she came on the phone to speak to me, I saw her driving her car over the Severn Bridge into Wales. As she did so, I saw a lorry swerving from the other side of the road, crashing through the barrier and hitting her car. I did not tell her. Then one day I went to the dentist, and as I was looking up to the ceiling while lying in the dentist chair, I saw the vision on the ceiling with a voice saying, "This is the third time we have shown you." With that, I went straight back to work and called her and explained what I had seen. I could feel her, the location, the car she was in, the colour of the lorry, but not the date. Then after about two years, I received a phone call from her. Everything I had said happened. She was driving across the bridge, remembered my warning, looked at the other side of the bridge, and saw the lorry. With that, she put her foot down and moved from the fast lane, overtaking everyone before moving into the slowest lane, furthest away. The lorry crashed through the barrier, missing everyone. A vision given, a gift of life received.

The third memory is about not listening to my premonitions. I had dreamt three times about Swein falling off his tractor and hitting his head. I had chosen to ignore them. I had told Margaret what I had seen but we had agreed not to say anything. The next thing I knew was Margaret calling me to tell me that Swein was in hospital. He had fallen off his tractor and hit his head badly. I felt terrible, so I spent the whole time beating myself up for not saying anything. I visited him in hospital and was so upset, saying I was so sorry over and over. Swein just looked at me and said, "Lass, maybe you will act upon your visions from now on." To this day, I still wonder: had I have told him, would it have changed the outcome? Three different stories, three different outcomes. It is a great responsibility that we take on board as seers.

Over the centuries, many stories have been spoken that describe the gifts and powers of a seer. When we look back at history, we find that a seer is spoken of in the Bible. There are over twenty-three biblical verses containing the word. This was then changed to "prophet," meaning one who spoke directly with God. Stories abound of seers from ancient Babylon, Egypt, and Greece who interpreted dreams to predict the future. The seers known as *mantis* in Greece were experts in the field of divination and were highly regarded educated members of the elite. They played an important role in the day-to-day life of political, military, and daily life. Whenever the ancient Greeks went to war, so too did the seer. Greek myths spoke of a seer called Mopsus who took part in the search for the golden fleece and of Tiresias, who had been blinded by the gods and gifted the power of augury.

Before Christianity, seers were honoured and revered as wise men and women with a great gift. Then everything changed and suddenly the gift became the curse. When the Scots travelled to the lands of the Gaulish Celts, the seers and magickians held political power and were advisers to the kings. These *vates* held the knowledge of the ancient ones passed down from century to century, ensuring the direct line of seership. There are stories of the druids travelling to ancient lands to learn about and practice prophecy. The Highlands and the islands of Scotland are renowned for their seers too. The Highland word for a seer is *taibhsear*. Those with the "gift seen as a curse" called their practice *taibhsearachd*. It was said that those who carried this curse were either mentally impaired, deformed, or disabled from childbirth or as a result of an accident. What's interesting to note is the same similarities also exist for one born into the shamanic world. It is known that the shaman undertakes a similar experience as the witch seers of the Highlands and many other cultures.

Scotland's most famous seer was known as the Brahan Seer and was a seer of the Clan Mackenzie. He lived around the same time as Nostradamus in the early part of the seventeenth century. Stories abound of him falling asleep on a faery hill and finding a blue and black stone with a hole in it in his pocket. There are so many different stories about how he found the stone; however, what was very clear was the prophecies he predicted, including his own death. He was born on the Isle of Lewis and worked on the farm as a labourer for the Mackenzies, a clan of Scottish noblemen. His predictions came true many times, including the battle of Culloden, the Highland Clearances, World War II, Scotland having its own parliament, and the Channel Tunnel, to name but a few.

One day Lady Isabella called him to her to ask what her husband was up to in France. He was reluctant to tell her, but she forced the truth out of him eventually—her husband was seeing another woman. Isabella was so upset that she had the seer burnt in a barrel of tar. As he was being dragged off to meet his fate, he made his last prediction. He cursed the family of MacKenzie, saying that the house of Seaforth would come to an end. These last words came true exactly as he had foreseen. Today, a plaque with his name at Chanonry Point House on the Black Isle reads: "This stone commemorates the legend of Coinneach Odar, better known as the Brahan Seer. Many of his prophecies were fulfilled and tradition holds that his untimely death by burning in tar followed his final prophecy of the doom of the House of Seaforth."

All the information about the Brahan Seer has been handed down and collected from oral Gaelic traditions and then written down and published. The first publication was in 1877 and told many different, conflicting accounts reaching back over two hundred years. What we have left are the predictions that came true and the incredible insight that was given that changed many lives, some for the better and some for the worse. Have you made predictions that have come true? Do you know things that you want to tell people but are afraid to? We are lucky today that we will not be put into a barrel of tar or burnt at the stake. Fortunately for those of us that see, feel, and know things, those times have past. However, we are still ridiculed by those who think they know better. I recall being told by a friend of mine that they were told they could not be a healer if they wanted to be a medium. I hear this sort of nonsense all the time! People try to separate others' gifts. We all have gifts and all work in different ways. Don't let anyone ever put you in a box. It's your life, your gift! You are in charge of your life, your beliefs. As Albert Einstein believed, imagination is more important than knowledge, because it is the language of the soul. And if you pay attention to your imagination, you will discover all you need to be fulfilled.

I remember having many visions, premonitions, and dreams as a child. I was told that my imagination was not to be trusted and that it was false by my school teachers and parents. I was always seeing pictures of people dead and alive, places I did not know, and past lives. I compare it to when I nearly died, seeing all my life in pictures flashing across my internal vision. I see things in pictures, never words. Those who are visionaries see the message through visions or in the dreamtime. Many who are called clairvoyant can see what is hidden from others and is actually destined for them. Their gifts and abilities can see through people, places, and situations. Seers use their imagination to be able to see into other worlds and realities. They use the eyes of their soul to guide them to a higher perception. Some call it a gift, others a burden.

Seers use their imagination for their work in connecting with the spirit realms, healing, and to facilitate a bigger picture. This amazing tool creates what we want to experience. It's beyond thinking, it's a knowing, a feeling that attracts life's future outcomes. Our imagination and our thoughts create our future. Listening to storytellers stirs our imagination and evokes new memories. This ability to picture oneself is to conceive something that does not already exist.

The seer uses their imagination as a tool to see into the person they are working with in the past, the present, and their destiny.

Swein taught me that the magick within us is an art form. We are given a blank canvas to work upon. Is your picture a masterpiece or have you still to paint your magnum opus? The magick that lives within each of us is drawn from the source of our human soul, our connection to the spirit in all things. It is creation in form, so that every magickal act is creative. Once the nature of magick is understood it transcends the universal law of cause and effect. That magick combined with your level of understanding creates the wise man or woman. Being a witch, a wise one, is about defining and mastering personal power coupled with a profound understanding of the ancestors, fae, and spirit in all things. Divination is now introduced to you as the next level of understanding.

Divination of the Ancients

Often going hand-in-hand with seership is divination. To learn this sacred art of divination first you must know the history behind it, who created it, and why. All the great mystery schools first taught the origins of where a skill or art came from. They were the ancestors who went before us, who gifted us with this sacred wisdom. They risked everything so that we could inherit this ancient wisdom, albeit slightly diluted from its original teachings, so that we can carry on the line of this sacred art. It's amazing how divination and most of its forms have stood the test of time, considering the persecutions, banishments, and deaths that were inflicted on the unfortunate souls who believed in this way of life.

Divination is used to predict and see events that are about to happen or to gain answers or ask questions. It usually involves using natural objects such as weather, feathers, bones, shells, and many other tools. The use of interpretive tools or objects can help assist your imagination. You have all the tools, which is the paint, and your

imagination is the paint brush. When you have a clear canvas, meaning you get out of the way, then the real work begins.

Remember, your work is to protect the people and ourselves from unseen harm, whether from the spirits or humans. It is guarding and stoking the fire within, knowing when to open the door and when to keep the door closed in every thought, word, action, and deed. It is about the containment of the magick within and without and then being able to go out with it to assist and help others. When you are fully living in and aware of your true power, you know that you don't need any physical ritual tools to assist in your work. You are the magick, you are the powerhouse, the fire that only needs the spark (spirit) to ignite you.

Divination Journey Exercise

To awaken your imagination, I want you to find a place that is quiet where you will not be disturbed. Turn off your phone. As you read this journey, it will evoke a deeper understanding of the fact that nature's signs are all around you. This is a story that will show you how to exercise your intuition and how many people may miss the signs in life. Now read the following:

It's a beautiful sunny day and it's your first day off in a long time. You are feeling exhausted and no longer have the certainty or focus to make important life decisions. Life at the moment seems like an illusion, so you decide to seek nature in order to gain a bit of clarity and healing. Before you head off, you make a hot drink in a china cup that once belonged to a now-deceased relative. As you relax, you have a quick read of your horoscope in the newspaper, which reads, "Good luck surrounds you today. Time to be patient and ask for guidance. Your sensitivity and perception are heightened as you seek direction and confirmation to the questions you ask. Time to interpret the omens and signs communicated to you today. Take a gamble, your destiny awaits you."

Upon finishing your drink, you observe a strange shape made by the remnants of your drink in the bottom of your cup. As you grab your car keys, you notice a little bird tapping on the kitchen window. You find it rather odd, as he has been appearing every day for the past week. You nearly trip over a black cat walking across your path on your way to the car, and as you switch on the ignition, the clock reads 11.11, a number combination that you seem to keep seeing lately.

You have no plan of where you are going and just head along the road until somewhere takes your fancy. Eventually you come across a sign that reads Caution—Slow Down, and as you do, you see smoke rising from a fire in a nearby field. Ahead, you recognise an entrance to some woodlands that you used to play in as a child and haven't visited since. So you drive down the quiet, leafy lane. You feel rather fortuitous that you have the woods to yourself, because often when it comes to being amongst the energy of other people, you become quite fragmented as your personal power fades.

Walking slowly through the beautiful woods, you duck as a flock of birds sweeps past you. You follow their direction deep into the forest, and just as you are wondering which path to follow, you notice animal footprints. You follow them and are so glad that you did for you have been led to a delightful glade, rich in the abundance of delicate flowers and a crystal-clear pool of water. You sit next to it, muse at how fate has brought you to this very spot, and glance at your illuminated reflection staring back at you.

Mindlessly, you pick a daisy and start to pull the petals off as you chant, "He loves me, he loves me not," just as you did as a child, and laugh at the spontaneity of the moment. You haven't felt this way in such a long time. How you wish you could leave your current situation and forge a successful career of your own choosing, one that suited your talents and creative side. You close your eyes and gently lie back on the soft grass, dreaming of fulfillment.

Suddenly you are startled by the cawing of a crow who circles overheard. You realise that you must have been asleep for a while as the light has begun to fade. As you look up into the sky, you notice big rain clouds —one in the shape of an angel. As you stand there, a white feather floats down in front of you, and you recall that this has become a regular occurrence recently. A fork of lightning and a large clap of thunder prompts you to run back to the car. But you laugh all the way as you become drenched in the rain, just like you did in those happy childhood days.

Once home, you decide to make yourself chicken soup to warm yourself up. You come across the wishbone and laugh aloud. You recall how you used to pull the wishbone with your favourite relative, now deceased, and you suddenly realise how much you miss them. This person was always telling you tales, telling you about nature, the power of herbs, the weather, and so much more. They were called the local witch, with many people knocking on the door for charms, remedies, and the occasional spell. You look over to the sideboard and smile at the framed picture of them. You take out their belongings from a drawer and retrieve their wedding ring, which is wrapped in an old hankie. You hold the ring and smell the hankie as the tears fall. Suddenly you jump as you hear a noise. A book has fallen off the shelf.

Cautiously you pick it up and notice it was one of your relative's favourite books on divination that she had left to you. A card falls out of the book. It's a thank you card from your relative with a message to you, which reads, "Always be authentic. Don't let anyone project onto you their beliefs, falseness, anger, or bitterness. Every day, affirm to yourself that you are beautiful. Look for the messages given to you every day in nature by people and things around you. Remember all that I have taught you. Enjoy this book of divination and

embrace the mystical omens around you. Let your prayers be carried on the wings of time to the Summerlands. I will be waiting. I love you. XXX. P.S. Enjoy the book."

You notice the date on the card. It's the same as today's! It's the anniversary of their birthday. With a feeling of love for them in your heart, you look through the window and witness a shooting star lighting up the night sky. You take the book to bed, light a candle, and ask your grandmother for her help, for you are so unhappy and wish for assistance in your life purpose. Your dream is to be set free and to do what really makes your heart sing. As you read through the pages of the book of divination, suddenly it becomes clear. You have been given messages all day long!

The following morning you wake up with a sense of inner peace. As you open the pile of mail, you come across a letter advising you that you have been awarded a large amount of money—enough to pay off all that you owe and to invest in the business that you have been wishing for. Wow! You realise what an auspicious day yesterday was, as you recognise all that you encountered were signs, omens, and messages from spirit all around you. From now on, you will ensure that you pay attention as you watch, look, and listen to the spirits all around you.

What this highlights is that the spirit within everything purposefully reaches out to us in this way every day. It's just that we have been trained not to notice, to disregard these messages and put them down as "coincidence," if indeed we even notice. We come across countless people who have ignored fallen feathers. They regret it the very instant they realise that they might have inadvertently ignored a message from spirit. One that has literally fallen right in front of their nose! This was not the case for the seers throughout history. From the moment they rose to the time they went to sleep, they saw everything as a message from the world of spirit. They would wake up and ponder on the dreams they had, knowing they were messages that the spirits wished to impart. They acted on prophetic auspices and gave thanks for the gifts given to them by means of prayers and offerings at the purpose-built temples and groves throughout the lands. In return, they were gifted with frequent signs and omens.

The word "divination" means "to foresee" or "inspired by the gods." Recorded on ancient crude-form tablets, means of divination were taught to those who were believed to have been chosen by the gods to represent them, such as kings and pharaohs. Oracles, seers, and prophets from the ancient lands of China, India, Babylon, Assyria, Israel, Egypt, Greece, and Rome travelled far and wide to further their knowledge and become educated orally in the sacred arts of divination. They journeyed to our magickal lands and gifted us their knowledge and wisdom as told in the storytellers' songs of old.

In ancient Greece, oracles and seers were believed to be the conduits for the gods on earth. Their visions and prophecies were understood to be the will of the gods, verbatim. In ancient Rome, official colleges for augurs and the study of divination were built. No wars were fought, no laws passed, unless the augurs or seers were consulted. There were hundreds of different forms of divination used throughout the known world in this period of time. These forms of divination lasted thousands of years to the benefit of those both who served and who received the divine messages.

So, what happened? Why do we not consult great oracles and recognise the divine messages within signs and omens that cross our path? Fear is what happened! No longer could augurs speak for the gods, for they were replaced by bishops and priests who spoke on behalf of a singular god. Christianity emerged and fully became the religion that replaced pagan beliefs; priest and diviner were one. Divination, however, was tolerated in early Christian years. In order to bring about control and manipulation, religious acts were passed to bring about separation from the gods. The oracles and augurs were no longer allowed access to the creator gods. It was forbidden to foresee or foretell future events, to discover hidden esoteric knowledge and read the ancient writings of the former gods. They were not allowed to interpret omens, connect with the spirits of the dead, or use intuitive perception or the gift of second sight.

Wise ones also used weather and crop divination to assist in the community. Today this is a lost art due to modern technology. We rely on machinery to do our bidding. In return, our natural intuitive abilities have been replaced by something man-made and not of nature's way. Divination was used to assure an abundance of crops, a bounty of fruit, and fish of plenty in the lochs and streams. The wise one would connect with the elements in order to gain insight and to "see" how to proceed that day, that month, that year. Interpreting weather patterns gave good indications for making plans for planting and harvesting. With a comprehensive and working knowledge of herbs and plants, wise ones became the medicine men and women of the community, helping heal and cure ailments and disease. This awareness, that all is sacred, that all has its perfect place, is the way of the Scottish wise woman or man. Sadly, humans have become arrogant in believing that they have dominion over the world, forgetting that we share it, not own it.

Weather Witching

Witches have been used throughout history to manipulate and control storms both on seas and on land. It is possible that Jacquetta and Elizabeth Woodville did just that when they whipped up a storm so powerful that the boats could not get into any port in France for days, which resulted in the Earl of Bothwell being tried for witchcraft on the sinking of the ships of King James I (and VI of Scotland) on their passage from Copenhagen to

Scotland. One of the well-known Scottish witches, Isobel Gowdie, could call up the winds just by banging a stick against a wet cloth on a stone or rock. They even said Queen Elizabeth I used Dr. Dee and other witches to call upon storms. Magickal folk have been doing weather magick since ancient Greece and I'm sure before that.

All over the world you can find charms and spells that have been used in many different cultures. In Scotland, the Scottish broom is gathered to whip up the winds and call them forth; they could also be used to bring the rains in. Wild heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) was also used to bring forward the mists and rain. In Orkney, sailors bought wind strings with knots from the weather witches for a sixpence so they could have a quick passage. The witches would go to the top of the highest mountains in Orkney and tie the different winds from different directions in knots, usually three.

Storm witches are powerful beings who control the winds, the seas and oceans, the air, and sometimes fire to create havoc. They are intimate with the wild forces of nature. They love sitting outside in thunder and lightning storms with their wild hair blowing in the wind and their clothing sopping wet. They love to whistle to attract the nature spirits and create wind manipulation spells. It is known that many medieval witches cast spells just by whistling in nature. These storm callers, warlocks of Scotland, were used to stop the Vikings from landing on their shores. On Iona, the islanders saw the Viking ships approaching, went to the faery wells, and drew up the water. They used the water to create a violent storm that caused the ships to be torn asunder on the rocks of Iona beneath the faery hill. Any ship sailing on a Friday was thought to be doomed because the Goddess Frigga and her witches would whip up a storm.

Swein taught me cloud divination, known as aeromancy. This form of divining is probably one of the oldest. I would sit for hours on top of the hill behind Swein's house and watch the clouds go by. I was instructed to observe the shape, the form, and the direction from which the winds were blowing. Most of us as children loved to watch the shapes and images they created. Of course, we all saw different shapes as our imagination ran riot. Once I knew the different winds, Swein asked me to start cloud bursting, or "busting" as it is also known by.

I was instructed to focus my attention on one area in the sky with clouds in it, and then I was instructed to focus on the sun behind the clouds and move the clouds away. I remember when my mother was alive and we drove down to Cornwall with my then-husband. It had been raining all the way from London and my husband said that we should turn back. I said "No, it's okay. When we get there, we can do a little cloud busting." In the distance, we saw the town and I focussed, as Swein had taught me, on the clouds. Sure enough, the clouds moved, and the sun came through. My mother just looked at me. She was an atheist and shook her head, but at the same time, she had a smile on her face.

Cloud Busting Exercise

Go outside on a cloudy day. Find a place where you can sit down in nature and relax. It's important that you are not stressed. You can do a form of meditation by watching the clouds for a while and noticing the different shapes and forms. Once you feel relaxed enough, turn your attention to a group of clouds. You can get the clouds to form different shapes as well. It's important that you believe that we are connected to all living things around us, the spirit in all things. Now focus on one particular cloud. Start with a small one. Totally focused, think what shape you would like to change it to or move for the sun to come through, or you can dissipate it completely. Don't get stressed out trying to do this. It takes time. The most important thing is to believe that it will work and it will. Enjoy yourself, have fun as you deepen your awareness of divination.

I loved living in Inverness. It sits at the mouth of the Cromarty Firth. I worked for the airlines at one time, flying out of Inverness, and there were always problems with the winds suddenly changing. The wind that I remember the most is known as Gentle Annie or Annie. They say there is a gap in the hills near the Cromarty Firth and when Gentle Annie blows through that gap, she is not so gentle. Many times, we would be coming in to land only to suddenly have to abort the landing due to the wind, go around again, and land in the opposite direction.

Do you notice which way the wind is blowing? My dad would go out just before midnight on New Year's Eve, known as Hogmanay, to see which way the winds were blowing. Once he had done that, he would wait for the bells to strike midnight and come in with a piece of coal and tell us what would happen in the year ahead. It's important when working with the elements and the elementals of air to know your winds, so here is a list to help you:

The Twelve Winds of Divination

- 1. East wind is all about new beginnings and aspiring to new heights, a change of fortune, and good luck in business and home-life.
 - 2. Southeast wind is about making plans, travel, and starting new ventures.
 - 3. South-southeast wind is most fortuitous, having good luck and abundance.
 - 4. South wind is about celebrations and focussing on your well-being.
- 5. South-southwest wind is about withdrawing from given situations that do not bode well, not a time for speculation.
 - 6. Southwest wind is the "mother" wind; look to nurture and heal yourself.

- 7. West wind is about justice for all who seek it, removal of those in authority who are not just, but avoid confrontation at all costs.
- 8. Northwest wind is about shedding what is no longer needed in relationships and the removal of sticky situations.
 - 9. North-northwest is about determination and strengthening your resolve to find a way through.
 - 10. North wind is about caution with money and people. Be prepared to stand your ground.
- 11. North-northeast wind is about the perils of pleading ignorance, choosing to go against help, advice, and signs. Prepare for what may come if you decide to resist change.
- 12. Northeast wind is about making preparation for change, looking at what you can release and what you will take with you moving forward.

The way that Swein taught me to work with the winds and the directions was to stand and face them and feel. Everyone who does this feels different feelings. I would suggest that if you have the time each day, go stand in a different direction and let the wind share with you their feelings. I notice that when I stand in the west and north it feels very masculine and when I stand in the east and south feminine. I will leave it to you to experience the living winds. Enjoy.

Scottish Divination Revealed

Within the Highlands and islands of Scotland, an augur is known as a *frithir* and the divination is called a *frith*. They were used for locating lost animals, people, and objects. The frithirs were the hereditary state augurs of the kings of Scotland. They would stand barefooted and blindfolded before sunrise on the threshold of the castle and invoke an invocation. With hands on each side of the doorframe, they would invoke the local deities and ask for clear seeing. They would then make a prediction on what they saw when they removed their blindfold. This was then adapted for local people to do the same thing. What they saw were the signs of nature. If you live in nature, try doing the same thing. Stand with eyes closed and ask the spirits. Then when it feels right, open your eyes. All forms of divination work wonderfully if they are from nature. This is because they are imbued with the energy of the spirit that resides in them. By asking the spirits and forces of nature for advice and knowledge, we are directly linked to the questions and answers we seek. I would sit for hours at the divide of the River Ness in Inverness looking for signs and answers to questions I would have in my life. I would watch fires burning, look for their teachings, and observe birds flying from different directions. If a bird flew from left to right, it indicated that good news was coming, and if it flew from right to left, it meant that something sad was about to present itself.

I remember Winnie reading the tea leaves. I loved watching her preparing the "brew" in her grandmother's tea pot. The water was taken from a spring or well and chants and prayers were recited before she boiled the pot on the hearth. She would leave the tea leaves under the full moon for three nights to imbue them with magickal powers. She had to have the finest tea from India, which my great-grandad brought her. He had a magickal old-fashioned corner shop, something just like out of Harry Potter. Once ready, she would place a headscarf on her head and bring the pot to the table. Once we drank the tea, she took our cups, shook out the remaining tea, and placed them upside down, turning the cup three times while singing a song. She would read us our present and future. It was exciting times listening to our future being told to us.

As a child, I clearly remember food being used for divination. Winnie used to bake bread with raisins and currants and put in all sorts of different things, such as rings, coins, and even thimbles. The idea was a bit like the Christmas pudding, and anything you found was considered lucky. This was another form of divination. My grandmother Meiklejohn who lived on a farm in Caithness near John O'Groats used to bake bannock bread at the fire festivals. I remember wanting to eat it when it came out of the oven and was always disappointed when she would walk out onto her land throwing bits of the cake over her shoulder, chasing away any bad spirits so that the chickens would be safe from any foxes around. I remember her telling me stories of when her grandfather used to use mutton shoulder bones to read signs before the lambing season. He would go to the local spea-wife to see what signs she could read for the future of his crofts and lands.

Reading the Signs Exercise

Do you experience precognition, a feeling of dread as if something is going to happen, or have visions or dreams of spirits? Do you think of someone and then they call? Have you always known you have a special gift? Did it scare you as a child? Perhaps now is a good time to take your gift further. By connecting to your inner witch, you are calling on your intuition combined with your inner power to join forces with the universal power that surrounds you. A wonderful way of working with spirit is scrying to get the answers. Scrying is a method of divination that commonly refers to using a reflective object or surface, but traditionally there are many other methods. It's also great for meditation. The most important thing is to silence the inner critic, quieten the noise of the mind.

When we use scrying, we journey from our left logical brains used for work to the right hemisphere where our intuition and imagination is located. The right side of the mind is pictures and images, the left is facts and figures. You will never be able to connect to spirit in your left hemisphere's work mode. Scrying brings forth the

visions and messages by "seeing" into a crystal ball or other mediums to help you in your divination. When you reveal the unseen, you are in fact opening up your second sight to see beyond your five senses. Just choose something that feels right for you from the following list:

- Water scrying is ideally done on the surface of a running stream but can be done using a bowl of water or dropping ink into a bowl of water and watching the patterns or even dropping pebbles into a bowl of water and interpreting the ripples.
- Fire scrying is done by gazing into a lit candle with a mirror behind it or looking into the hearth fire at home or around a campfire.
 - Crystal ball scrying is done by gazing into the crystal ball and focussing on your vision.
 - Oil scrying can be done by dropping oil into a bowl of water and watching the different patterns emerge.
- Mirror scrying is done by staring into a mirror and observing what shapes and images appear. Dark mirror scrying is done in the same manner but by using a dark/black mirror, which can be bought in any good "witchtype" shop.
 - Wax scrying is done by dropping wax into or onto a water surface.
 - Cloud scrying is done by watching the clouds and their shapes and forms.
 - Smoke scrying is done by watching smoke rise from a fire or burning herbs.
 - Eye scrying is done by gazing into another's eyes and observing any patterns or images that appear.
- Shell scrying is done by listening to the ocean through a shell held to your ear and noticing any images it evokes.
 - Paper scrying is done by burning paper then reading the ashes to see what letters are left or imagined.
- Book scrying is done by standing in front of your bookshelf and seeing which book jumps out at you. Or take a book and flip through it until it lands on a page that feels right for you and read the message.
- Stone scrying is done by watching pebbles on the beach being moved by the sea, by looking into water in a stream or lake and seeing the patterns, or by looking into a seer stone.

My first form of scrying was cloud scrying. Spending a day in nature scrying with mother Gaia's gifts, such as leaves in the autumn, watching the wind blow through the trees, helps you to soften your focus to "peep" deeper into the world of scrying. Scrying is all about emptying your mind, removing the "inner chatter" of day-to-day things. It allows your inner sensing to develop and create a bond with the natural forms around you. It's a bit like riding a bike. At first it's not easy, but after a while you stop thinking about how to ride the bike and just go. That's the knowing part of the right hemisphere, not the thinking part of the left hemisphere. I would recommend that you spend a day in a forest, by the beach, or in the mountains where you can be completely engulfed in the natural world. Switch off your phone and attune to your surroundings. Allow your senses to emerge with the life force energy that comes from all things natural. Once you have found a favourite spot, sit down or lie down and feel everything around you. Focus on your breath, and only your breath, for a good five minutes. Once you feel totally relaxed, open your eyes and stare softly at the clouds, the stream, the trees, or the pebbles on the beach. Feel the ebb and flow of nature. Allow yourself to hear, feel, see, and touch your inner senses, being at one with nature. Enjoy and remember you are connected to your inner knowing.

Indoors Scrying Exercise

You will need:

- A candle (colour of your choosing)
- A mirror (preferably self-supporting)

If you cannot make time to go outdoors, you can easily practice "seeing" indoors. The best time is dawn, dusk, or midnight. I also find when we just wake up, and are not fully in our left-thinking minds, is a good time as well. The best form of indoor scrying is at night. Place a candle in front of a mirror and sit in front of it. Make sure the room is in the dark and you will not be disturbed. Now sitting, focus your awareness on the candle and only the candle. Focus deeply on your breath, chasing away any thoughts about left brain activity. After five minutes of breathing deeply, focus on the candle, close your eyes, relax. Now open them again and softly gaze at the candle and mirror and allow the images and pictures to appear. You are tapping into an ancient art used by many great and gifted seers. Nostradamus, Dr. John Dee, and the Brahan Seer of Scotland, used these tried-and-tested ways of connecting with Source for the answers you seek.

Chapter Tips

A wise one needs the ability to weave between the worlds. To be able to walk a fine line between the material world and the spiritual world of magick and mystery is a great talent. To be seen but unseen and heard but silent, to feel but become unattached and to know but yet observe, is the art of the witch, so remember:

• Seers were honoured and revered as wise men and women with a great gift. Have you been recognised as a wise woman or man, and if so, who gifted you the name you use? Who have been your teachers and how do you honour them?

- Being a witch, a wise one, is about defining and mastering one's own personal power coupled with a deep understanding of the ancestors, fae, spirit in all things, and the deities. What is your personal relationship with them?
- All forms of divination work wonderfully if they are from nature. Try to use natural objects like feathers, shells, pebbles, and bones as much as possible in your work, as well as work with natural sources of water and wind. Working with nature gives us clear, precise information.
- Witches have used weather witching throughout history to manipulate and control storms both on sea and land. One of the oldest forms is cloud divination. Consider practising this more often.
- When it comes to interacting with the twelve winds of divination it is good to get a sense of the difference between them, then you will discover which one you like working with as it can heighten your spellcasting too.
- Within the Highlands and islands of Scotland, an augur is known as a frithir and the divination is called a frith. They were used for locating lost animals, people, and objects. Many people have a gift for being able to sense lost items or even people. If you are one of those people, look at developing it further.
- Scrying is a wonderful way of working with spirit. When we scry, we need to switch off our logical left hemisphere of our brains, used for work and day-to-day chores, and engage our right hemisphere where intuition and imagination reside. The right side of the brain is visual, using pictures and images, whereas the left side far more practical and factual. Have you found it a struggle to weave between work and magick? Perhaps you overthink or analyse things too much, or maybe you feel too much and let your emotions override the situation too often. Practice balancing the two hemispheres; this will help both the ease with which you can do your craft and the quality of the outcomes.

[contents]



Staff, Stone, and Earth

o, you have explored some of the many gifts and rituals available to you. What comes next includes three important tools in Scottish witchcraft. These tools are full of natural power and magick because they are gifts from the natural world around us: of wood, of stone, and of the earth. Very few tools are crafted in Scottish witchcraft. The first one I learned about is the staff or crook. Swein always used his shepherd's crook wherever he went. In today's world, nobody would think twice about a shepherd's crook and its uses, except for herding sheep, but if we look back on its history it has a totally different meaning.

Shepherd's crooks were associated with pharaohs, kings, and popes as a symbol of power. The story goes that when Moses led his people out of Egypt, he had his staff of leadership that could change into a snake and part the Red Sea. Staffs of authority were used by the ancient Roman augurs for divination; they were their connection to earth and the heavens. We also see the caduceus of Hermes as a rod, staff, or crook with serpents entwined around it. Asclepius, the god of medicine and healing, had a staff with serpents entwined around it. There is a story of Aaron's staff being transposed into a snake and when the pharaoh's sorcerers saw this, they too threw down their staffs, which became snakes as well. Here we have staffs of power changing into snakes.

When we look at the meaning of the staff, it represents the Tree of Life, the Yggdrasil. It features in many stories. In the Garden of Eden, the snake changed from a symbol of power to one of evil. History changed as the snake was banished into evilness by the church, who use the power of the staff as a symbol of leadership. I was taught to use my staff as a representation of the Tree of Life. It's my connection between the upper worlds, with the branches reaching up, and the roots digging down toward the lower worlds. When placing my staff in the centre of a field or clearing, it represents how the ancestors cleared an area for building their homes when a single tree would be left. This would be known as the Tree of Life and was an important site for meetings of the council or tribe. Have you ever been drawn to a single tree standing on its own on a hill side or field? These places of power were used by the elders because they understood the meaning of the solitary tree. It was believed to be an ancestor of a human being. Our ancestors who lived on our ancient isles believed that all humans came from trees. Egyptian mythology also states that the first Egyptian gods were born under the Tree of Life.

When you stand with your staff in hand, you are connecting back to all those wise men and women who regarded the staff, rod, and crook as sacred. Today you will not find many references to what a staff is and what it represents to the person who holds the staff. From ancient times, it holds the power of the high priestess or priest. It is associated with power and authority, a weaver between the lower, middle, and upper worlds. When many people think of a staff, they imagine Gandalf or Merlin. Used by witches, Druids, Pagans, and shamanic practitioners, the staff of protection guards you when you make a stance against others.

It is very important that no one should touch your personal staff. Once used to record mythical tales of gods and goddesses and historical facts, it is used to store energy to become an extension of you. It's important when the time is right and you are called to spirit to be a keeper of the doorway by carrying a staff that you do not go cutting down trees and branches in your search for a staff. There are plenty of people out there who are master craftsmen or women and know the correct way of felling a tree in a sacred manner. You have a responsibility as an elder and wisdom keeper to ensure our earth is protected by only using what will not harm or destroy living, breathing earth.

The best wood for a staff is either oak or ash. It all depends on what you want to use your staff for. Do your research. When the time is right, your Tree of Life will appear along with the responsibilities and gifts. As the bearer of your own staff, you have obligations to carry out. Your staff will awaken in you a power that has lain dormant for many years and unleash from within you a connection to your past lives. Once you have your staff, it is time to connect it back to the earth and to your personal power. Look for a place of power away from cities and towns, preferably an empty field, or on top of a mountain. Another wonderful place is a sacred site or grove. Make sure you will not be disturbed.

Connecting Back to Your Power Exercise

You will need:

• Natural material for marking boundaries (wood chipping, sand, birdseed, etc.)

Stand at the threshold and ask permission of the spirit of the land. Once you step over the threshold, mark your boundaries with natural markings such as wood chipping or something that is light and easy to use. Now walk around until you find the centre of your circle then place your staff into the earth, connecting it back to its roots. As you hold the staff in the centre, feel the energy flowing up from the earth into your hands. Secure the staff in the centre so it will not fall over, hold onto it, and face north. If you are not sure which way each of the cardinal directions are, mark them out beforehand. As you face north, call on the guardians and gatekeepers of the north as you say the following:

Ancestors of the north, I stand before you now and ask that you imbue my staff of wisdom with the powers of the north.

Call on all the aspects that feel true for you. Continue on in a sunwise direction facing east, south, west, then back to north, saying these words, replacing "north" with the respective direction, spoken out loud or silently to yourself. Still holding onto your staff, feel the earth beneath you and feel the roots of the staff going deeply into the earth. Once you feel your roots, go deep and you have a connection with the lower worlds, then look upward and draw down the energy of the upper worlds into your staff by calling on the deities to support and guide you in whatever tradition or craft you follow.

Now pull in all the energy from the north, earth; east, air; south, fire; and west, water; the energy of the lower worlds and the upper worlds into your heart centre. Become the tree of wisdom, the Tree of Life. Then when the time is right for you and you feel that you have your connection with all the elements, directions, and deities, lift your staff slowly out of the earth, holding it in both hands above your head, and say the following:

Staff of wisdom, power of light, connect me to the ancients with all of your might. I feel your presence deep within; now the time has come to for it to begin. A magickal connection with one and all, the Tree of Life is my wherewithal.

Just before Swein entered the world of spirit, he gifted me his seer's stone. I had visited him and Margaret on one of my trips to the Highlands, and as I was about to leave, he took me into his special room and handed me his seer's stone. "Here, lass," he said to me, "this stone I pass on to you now to continue on the lineage of Highland Seers. You have a great responsibility to carry now." I was blown away. When we work with the ancient spirits of the stone people, we are connecting with a sacred ancestral force going back over 300 million to 500 million years ago. Stones are also known as the "ancient ones" and are revered as the first spirits to inhabit the earth. One of our Scottish faery traditions believes that within every stone there is a star. Stone and gem lore predates written history. When we think of stone people, as they are known, we connect to the ancient stone circles that were built during the Neolithic and Bronze ages.

The Clara Cairns, where I had an amazing experience of meeting the ancestors, is one such place in the Highlands. From Callanish on the Isle of Lewis, which has in total five stone circles, large and small, to the rings of Brodgar and Stenness in Orkney, Scotland, is covered with stones of power. Today we are compelled by an unseen force to stand within these circles of power to connect and remember those who built and knew the alignments of the stars. Many of these circles are aligned to the sunset or sunrise of midwinter. These ancient sites, once attended by our ancestors and their ancient cultures, are being awakened once again by those who wish to carry on and revive the magick that resides with the circles of power.

When I did a TV show for BBC Two Scotland called *Coast to Coast*, we filmed at an oath stone and talked about what had happened there. Chieftains were once inaugurated on the stone; standing on the stone in front of the people who had chosen them, with a clod of earth in their hands, swearing to uphold their clan, traditions, and ancestors. This was also a place where they would come and discuss their clan meetings to pass laws and to judge those who had committed a crime. They also went to sacred earth mounds if there were no oath stones nearby. In addition to passing laws, they also performed high rituals there. Over time, monastic religion swept in, and the rituals started to be performed in buildings near the oath stone, sacred mound, or sacred wells. The sacred was contained within a building and the power of nature left outside. The chieftains were moved to another building away from the places of power and a new tradition replaced the old.

Those who wished to marry came to the oath stone to give their solemn promises of handfasting to each other. Once the oath had been taken by the couple, they would then carve their names in either stones or trees. It is believed that if they held a part of the stone in their hands during the saying of the vows, it would cast their spirits into the stone. Sacred indeed, part of the earth, a strong symbol of life. There is a saying when talking about someone who supports you and takes care of you through times of trouble: "You are my rock." Maybe this saying comes from a time when the rock was the symbol of power and gave strength to all those who sat, stood, or lay upon or under them.

The Scottish people are known for being superstitious. The predictions of the seers struck fear into local residents, causing great turmoil. Many of the Brahan Seer's predictions were regarding *menhirs* (single stones).

One of his predictions was of the Eagle Stone at Strathpeffer. The Pictish menhir there has been placed in cement to ensure that it will not fall over again. Twice it has fallen and if it falls a third time, the surrounding valley will be flooded and the stone used as an anchor. One stone that has been a great seat of power and ties in with the oath stone is the stone of Scone known as the Stone of Destiny. It is believed that he who is crowned upon it is destined to be the true king of Milesian people and rule all the lands.

There are many legends surrounding this stone, one being that it was used as a pillow by Jacob when he dreamt of Jacob's ladder. Regarded as a sacred stone, it was removed from Haram and taken to Ireland then Scotland. The high kings of Ireland were reported to have been crowned on the hills of Tara on this stone of power from AD 400-850, where it was given on loan and never returned. Once in Scotland, this Tanis Stone (as it was also known) was used by the chieftains of Scotland for the coronation of the monarchs of Scotland. The coronations took place on Moot Hill at Scone Palace. King Kenneth I (AD 810-858) was the first king to be inaugurated on the stone and unite the Scotti and Picts, so legends speak. The stone was originally kept at Scone Abbey, hence its name. In 1296, hearing of its great powers, King Edward I of England took the stone down to Westminster Abbey as spoils of war. There are many rumours that the stone is not the real stone and that it is still hidden in the River Tay or buried in Dunsinane Hill. However, the stone was removed and damaged by Scottish nationalists, including the twenty-first great-grandson of King Edward I, and placed beside the Scottish Crown Jewels in Edinburgh Castle on St. Andrew's Day, 1996.

Take time to go out into nature and find a place that holds a stone circle. Once you have asked permission of the spirits of the land, enter into the circle or approach the great stone. Follow your intuition and be guided to a stone that calls to you. After asking permission, sit facing the stone and place your hands upon the stone, or sit on the stone, or rest your back against the stone. Close your eyes and allow the stone of power to show you its ancient history. Take the time to feel, see, and hear the memories that remain within the stones. This is one of the reasons why stone is used for a headstone for those who have departed. Their memories are written in stone and are forever recorded in the annals of time and set in stone. Once you have finished, give thanks to the ancient ones. Remember to leave an offering for the spirits and animals.

Magick of the Holey Stones

I was gifted a stone many years ago in Egypt. My dear friend, a Sufi from Luxor, handed me an amber stone with a hole in it. He told me it was a protective stone and it was important to wear it at all times. The ancient Egyptians were buried with these holey stones so that their souls could exit and journey to the underworlds. I was instructed to take it and bury it in the sand for three days and nights to clear the energy of the wearer from ancient times. I was then instructed to place it in water taken from the River Nile for three days and nights to wash and cleanse it and give it life force energy. Then it was time to place the stone in the sun and the moon energy leading up to the full moon. Once this was done, he placed it at the medulla oblongata, also known as the "mouth of god," on my neck.

You see, ancient stones are used to guard and protect the doorways of the soul. It is said when the soul enters the body at the time of conception, this is where it enters. This medulla is the main doorway for the body's supply of life force energy and also where it departs. Flavia once spotted, among all the stones on the stone-gravelled driveway, a small stone that had a hole in it. She had only just asked the fae for her own stone of protection and here it was. She took it into the forest that surrounds the house, where her mother still lives, and went to St. Fireside's Well, where she placed it into the earth. Three days later we returned, and she washed the stone from the well's holy waters and left it in a small container for another three days. Then the stone was placed in the sun and moon again leading up to the full moon. On the night of the full moon, she placed the stone on her silver necklace beside her faery star. Both of us had placed our stones around our necks on the night of the full moon a month apart. This tradition has been handed down from ancient times and still lives on in many countries today. In Scotland, healing stones are cleared and charged in the same way, the difference being, for healing stones, that they are placed on the trees to connect with healing energies.

Healing and protection stones with holes in them go by many names. In Scottish folk traditions, they are called hag stones or witches' stones. These stones—be they called witches' stones, hag stones, holey stones, Odin stones from the Orkney Islands, or aggry from Egypt—have holes bored through the centre by nature and not by human intervention. Usually found in streams, river beds, and beaches, they are created by water and other elements hitting the weakest spot of the stone with great force. The fusion of the elements of stone and water create a powerful combined force of nature. These naturally crafted stones, from large holed stones to the small hag stones, hold magick and protection for the wearer.

These ancient stones have been used for centuries in spellwork and ritual. They are used to break warding, banishment, and binding spells against you and also fend off negative energy directed at you to cause you illness. Wearing the stone or stones around your neck with red cord dipped in well water as a charm will stop someone cursing you and also stops nightmares. I believe these stones find you when the time is right, either as a gift as I experienced or like Flavia, who stood on the threshold of her door and spotted the stone out of millions of other stones. I remember visiting Iona with my dad, and he bought me a beautiful green necklace of stones. The story goes that the pebbles from the south beach of Iona are charms that protect you from drowning. These "mermaid tears," also known as stones of serpentine, have been used for centuries as a talisman for healing.

Winnie would take me to the beach to collect them. Then she would string them up over the windows and doors for protection against witches. She laughed about the irony of this by pointing out it was to ward against "bad" witches, which she wasn't. She would spit through the hole of a stone and throw it over her left shoulder, saying, "Begone, evil spirits. Do not cross this threshold." Then she would put the stone on the window ledge to ensure no evil spirits would enter into the house.

I loved going out with her first thing in the morning to walk the dogs. If there was dew on the ground, I would wash my face with it, as I was told it would make me beautiful. Winnie would tell me, when she used to collect the dew in a special little cup and let the drops of dew drip through the holey stones, to call the faeries to protect me. We would also go down to the beach and in the forest to collect white stones to attract the fae. She would put them in the corner of her garden where it was left naturally to attract the faeries. My great-grandad was a keen gardener and was not happy about all the old tales she used to tell us. She also used to say if you held up a witches' stone and closed one eye, you could see the faeries in nature and the tree spirits, and if you found one on the beach, you could peep through and see the mermaids. Who needs a television? Being with her was a magickal experience that changed my life as a little girl. She handed down to me the tales, superstitions, herb magick, and spells that my ancestors once worked with. Magick indeed.

Creating Magick with Stones

I remember being gifted with a wishing stone as a child. Winnie kept a basket of magickal stones in her kitchen. I would spend many hours playing with the stones. One of my favourites was the "wishing stone," which has a white quartz ring around the stone. To make a wish with this stone, you need to ensure that the line is unbroken. Use your index finger and place it on the white line. Now make a wish as you trace clockwise round the stone or pebble, saying:

I make my wish upon this stone and call the magick to be sown.

Once you have completed your wish, place it somewhere in your house, on a windowsill or somewhere you can see it to remind you of your spell.

You may already have witchy stones in your home or on your person. I would suggest for personal protection you wear a stone with a hole in it, if you can find one. It is also very good to connect you with the element of earth and assist with grounding. At St. Anne's Well, I can draw well water to work with my charms and spells. I cleanse all my stones and crystals with the water either by submerging them in the water or putting the well water into a spray bottle. By saining them (this is a Scots word for blessing and protecting), you can protect yourself, your home, and personal items through words, songs, and poetry. If, however, you do not have a hag stone, then it's time to find your own. If you can, go to the nearest beach and, before setting foot on the beach, ask the spirits of the land and sea for permission to seek out your witches' stone. Always remember to take with you an offering. It's important if you are taking something from nature to do an exchange of energy. Once you have asked permission, step onto the beach and slowly walk along. It's good to sing or speak to the spirits of place, as they love singing.

Once you start to find the stones, wash them in the sea water and ask for a blessing from the earth, air, fire, water, and lastly the spirits of land and place. You might find lots of them, but always remember to leave some for other people who will also be looking for their special stones of healing and power. Here are some suggestions for their use:

- Place on red cord and put in a red bag as a present for someone in need of healing.
- Look through the stone with one eye closed to see your loved ones in the spirit world.
- Put over your bed at night for protection and to refresh your personal energy.
- Place on an altar to represent earth.
- If building a new house, or extension, place in the foundations for luck, prosperity, and protection. And if moving to a new house, place at the front and back doors and on all the windowsills for the same reasons.
 - To increase fertility, place a witchy stone on the bed frame or carry in your pocket.
- If you want to attract a lover, place a stick that fits into the hole exactly to represent male and female and throw into the sea, calling on the selkies to assist you.
 - Rub the stone over painful joints to assist healing.
 - Polish them up and put on green ribbons as good luck charms.
 - Hang them on the stairs to prevent falls.
 - They make wonderful light pulls for rooms whilst also offering protection for the room.
 - Keep your hag stone in your hag bag or on your person.
- They were worn to protect people from snake bites, so if you live in a place where there are snakes, wear one.
 - Place your protection stones in the moon light for added energy.
 - If you are bothered by the spirits of the dead, wear one.

- If you own horses, hang one in each stable.
- If you are going on a sea journey, take one with you.
- Hang one on your mirror in the car.
- You can use your witches' stone when weather witching.
- Use on your key ring or any of the big keys you may have to use for magick.
- Create a wind chime using the hag stone as the bottom piece so the wind can blow the stone on the chimes.

Stones of the Gods

I had a reccurring dream of climbing through a stone with a hole in it, always the same stone and hole. When I sat and asked the ancestors what it meant, I was told it was part of an initiation. I had just split up with my husband and I was left wondering what to do. I decided to take a sabbatical while I thought about where my journey would take me to in my personal life. I had always wanted to travel to South America. I got in touch with my friend from Cusco and arranged a six-month trip around Peru and South America. Having travelled around South America before, I was led to do the trail of the Incas to Machu Picchu. Once I arrived at Machu Picchu, I started my climb up the mountain of Huayna Picchu. It's a long hard climb, and when I reached the top, suddenly before me was the stone with the big hole in it from my dream! I had done my initiation. It all made sense.

One of the most famous stones of the Norse god Odin was located at Stennis in the Orkney Islands. This headland of stones dates back to 3100 BC. The power stone of Odin stood eight feet high and had a hole in it slightly bigger than a human head. In 1814, a farmer who had no understanding of the power of standing stones and the gifts from the gods demolished the stone. This once-great stone of the gods was honoured and revered by the ancient Phoenician druids who travelled from their ancient lands to all over Europe, healing and curing many different diseases at the sacred holy rocks throughout the land. Many large stones with holes in them were destroyed, such as the ring stone at Avebury, because of the fear of them. The pastor of the town gathered all the villagers together to destroy the "ringed stone" to eradicate all pagan stones of worship. This happened all over the country as the stones of power were smashed to pieces with no regard for their ancient lineage and magick. However, the ritual of handfasting by passing and joining of hands on opposite sides of the stone is not dead. Today the traditional pre-Christian marriage rituals and ceremonies are regaining popularity and strength with many non-Pagans wanting a natural wedding in nature. The Wheel of the Year has come full circle and our rites of passage restored. Once, lovers would come to the temple of the sun and moon temples in Orkney at the rings of Brodgar and the rings of Stenness to pray and bless their union. Today, handfastings and weddings are now being performed in Scotland outdoors legally. You can get married at an ancient stone circle, standing stones, long-barrows, cairns, dolmens, and henges. Once the handfasting is completed, the couple can walk around the stones sunwise seven times to seal their good luck.

Building Your Stone Circle

You will need:

- A collection of stones or pebbles (large enough to be easily seen, but not too big to carry), locally from the woods, a beach, or open fields
- Somewhere outside in which to create the circle (could even be your own garden), about six feet in diameter, where you will not be disturbed

Gather local stones found out in the woods, on mountains, or on the beach so that they blend in naturally with the circle's environment. First find a centre stone then place it in a spot that feels good. It may be in the centre of a natural grove in a forest or on top of a mountain. I used to build circles of stone wherever I lived because sitting in the circle of stones empowered me. It was one of the first things Swein taught me to do. Once the centre stone is in place, then go to the north and place a stone. Then carry on around the circle, placing one at east, south, and west. Once this is done, then fill in the gaps. That is how I create my circle of stones, but you can create them in whatever way feels right to you.

I used to carry small pebble stones with me to be able to place them in a circle around me. It's the same if I am running a group, talk, or workshop. I take the chairs out of their straight lines and create a circle of chairs. There is a saying, "witches do it in circles," because they know the power a circle can give birth to. This magickal circle of stone creates a personal cone of power. Imagine carrying with you a pocket full of pebbles that at any time you can put in place around you in a circle. With your imagination, you can visualise your little stone circle as big and as powerful as Stonehenge. You can also use the small pebbles best found on a beach—remember the white stones belong to the fae—and again in your home, either on your altar or in a private space, place your stones of power around you.

I remember a ritual I did at Clava Cairns with Swein and others from our local group. We were each given a pledge stone to give our oath that we would always speak our truth with the other members of the group. If this was applied to workshops and gatherings to start an opening ceremony or ritual, it would set the scene for the

whole event or meeting. To swear on a stone an oath runs much deeper and older and connects more strongly back to our ancestors than a book does.

My Lakota teacher Ed McGaa, Eagle Man, told me of when he found his sacred stone in a river bed. He heard the stone calling to him and it shone brightly. He always carried the sacred stone with him as a teacher. Known as stone people, they are the record keepers on Mother Nature who teach how to heal, work with herbs, and listen to the earth. There is a story from Lakota folklore of a grandmother and her granddaughter getting lost in the wilds. The granddaughter dreamt of a stone person showing her which herbs and plants to live on and which stones would release the minerals in a soup to survive. They made pebble soup and survived until they were found.

Do you have a favourite stone that you either wear or carry with you or have on your altar? If you don't, take time out to find your stone medicine teacher in nature. Once you have found one that calls to you and you have sained it either in sea, salt, or well water, it is time to start your meditation. Find a place, preferably in nature, where you will not be disturbed. If this is not possible, find a quiet place in your garden or home. If you want to play soft music or have someone drum for you, that's also good. Sit or lie with your stone clasped in both hands to your heart. Close your eyes. Just allow yourself to feel the wisdom of the stone you hold. Connect with the spirit of the stone. Let it show you and connect with the ancestors. Once finished, place the stone on your altar or take it to bed and place it under your pillow. Happy dreams.

Healing Stones

In Scotland, healing stones come in many shapes and sizes. You have learned how to use your stones for protection and grounding; now we will focus on healing and seeing, and later on, how to use them for charming. I remember going to the clootie well at the Faery Glen on the Isle of Skye with my friend's mum, Susan. She was a healer and would take her healing stones to people who needed healing. She would get them to sit with the stone in their hands and focus their illness and pain into the stone. She would also use the stones and rub them on the affected area. One day I saw her washing the stones with milk and honey, a ritual going back for hundreds of years. She said you could also use whiskey and wine when healing someone, if you placed the stone in the drink and the patient would drink the liquid. It's very similar to the natives from Turtle Island who use stream water boiled with sage, cedar, or sweet grass. It is said that all stones used for healing should be sained at least once a year. Long ago the standing stones were washed in a similar fashion. I was shown different methods of working with stones for healing by Susan, which I will share with you to deepen your understanding of how sacred stones are.

The first was by saining the stone to be used for healing. The black stones or pebbles used were for drawing out the illness then washed and cleansed or taken to a holy well and deposited into the well. The old woman on Culloden Battlefield was always taking out the stones from the well waters and placing them around the back of the well. Then the white stone was placed on the body to place goodness and healing into the body. When I was in Peru, I saw a similar healing taking place using the black and white stones.

I was gifted a necklace of holey stones by a friend of mine who lives in the Orkney Islands. It is used on a person to heal them and draw out illness. Once used, it must be cleansed and cleared (sained) then hung up to dry over a threshold or window. I was shown how to body scry using my witches' stone. I was instructed to close my eye (the weaker one) and look through the hole into the body with my good eye. This gazing was used to detect any illness or abnormalities. I was blessed as a child as I had always been able to see people's energy fields. I remember, just before my mother passed, her energy field on one side was clear—no colour at all—and on her right side it was all grey. We went to a psychic fair and she had her aura photo taken. It was clear, on one side there was no colour and it was grey on the other where the cancer was. Using the hag stone helps to define and accentuate what you see. You can also use the hag stone to see spirit by a form of divination, and if you are out in nature, you can also see using the eye technique to see the faery folk.

Susan used to take us down to Nairn beach on the Cromarty Firth to search for witches' stones forged by the sea. Once we collected the stones, she would show us how to get rid of things we did not want in our lives. In the left hand we would hold the black stone representing the past and in our right hand the white stone to betoken the future. We would say out loud what we did not want in our lives then spit on the stone to seal the charm then throw it out as far as we could. Once this was done, we would say what we wished to happen in our future, kiss the stone, then again throw it out to sea. I loved those days of magick, learning and working with nature. Those are the times I truly cherish in my memories. Happy days.

And we are blessed in Scotland to have crystals that have been used by healers using their different properties. One such stone is known as the Cairngorm stone from the Cairngorms in the Highlands of Scotland. I was given for my twenty-first birthday present from my mum a beautiful Cairngorm stone set in gold. It was made as a ring but was so big I had it made into a necklace. These stones are very rare today and to find a good smoky quartz is very special indeed. They are the national gem of Scotland and considered a sacred stone dating back to the time of the druids. The stone was placed in a brooch and worn on the clan tartan. They were the clans' talismans and were regarded as magickal, containing healing powers. Other crystals that were found were agate, pyrope garnets, amethyst, jasper, serpentine, and sapphire. These stones were found naturally or dug for and were honoured and revered as sacred and holy. Today the only stones used for healing that people are aware

of are for stone massage. Basalt stones hold the heat for a long time and have a very high content of iron and magnesium.

Working within Scottish witchcraft, like all genuine craft work, is seeing the magick in places other do not see. It's about a sacred connection with nature using all the natural gifts the gods have gifted us. We work using ancient wisdom, magick imbued with twenty-first century knowledge, with harm to none. Today we all know that our journey to our chosen destination is as caretakers of this sacred earth. The ancestral force within our ancestors was so strong. They wanted to pass on this ancient spirit so we could remember. How many of you love to watch series and films such as *Vikings* (2013) and others? They show us that our ancestors worked hard to survive harsh worlds, that they honoured and respected the earth, the spirits, and the elementals. They gave offerings to placate them, knowing that the gods were in control, not us. This goes for the spirits in all things; they too are in control, not us. We need to have a humbleness, integrity, when working with the powers that be.

Earth

You have read in this chapter about how the chieftains held a clod of earth in their hands and swore a sacred oath to all to uphold the peace and laws of the land. When the Vikings first came onto these lands, they too took a clod of earth in their hands as a sign that they owned the land and staked their claim. Other rituals involving a clod of earth have been used from the earliest of traditions. The soil is sacred to all, from the gods to the spirits of place, the sith, the ancestors—all cannot exist without the ground beneath our feet. We place our homes upon it using it as firm foundations, we plant our crops in it, our animals feed off it, and yet today hardly any tradition left honours the spirit of the earth, the soil, the ground that feeds us, sustains us.

I have experienced many rituals and ceremonies in my life including sun dance, sweat lodge, vision quest, fire walking, and sacred plant medicine rituals, but the one that stands out the most is being buried in the earth. Yes, it was fearful being buried in an earth coffin with only a small hole to breathe through. Except for fasting for four days and nights—which pushed my boundaries of fear to the limit as I was pierced through my arms and attached to a tree—being buried alive was my nemesis. The fear that rises up is uncontrollable. I went from screaming, crying, facing fears of abandonment, of nobody finding me, to seeing images of films I had watched of people being buried alive. In my terror I started to observe my thoughts and where they originated from. Suddenly I felt the warmth of Mother Nature wrapping her arms around me. I spoke to her, sang to her. I imagined what it would be like to be a seed placed in the ground. I could feel my roots going deep into the earth, while at the same time I could feel myself pushing though the earth into the air, feel the sun and the wind feed me, nurture me. Then the rain came, and I became one with all of the elements. I sang out loud, "The earth, the water, the fire, and the air return, return," I continued to sing songs to Mother Nature.

When they came to unearth me, when the sun rose, the facilitator's first words to me were, "We could hear you singing your songs." Yes, because I was the earth, the elements, I was the tree of life in that moment. I knew that I was one with everything, a part of nature, not separated nor divided, but whole.

To strengthen your connection to the earth, I would suggest you get a clod of earth from your ancestral lands. If this is not possible, get a clod of earth from a place you hold as sacred. Go to this place and ask permission from the spirits of the land to remove this piece of earth. Using a tool of your choice—not iron if possible, as the fae do not like it—cut into the earth starting in the north then the east, south, and west. Once you have cut a square, remove the clod of earth, about a handful. Replace the earth with an offering. It's important always in everything you do that there is an exchange of energy. Thank the spirits of the land. Now return home and place it in a container of your choice. Place it on your altar to represent and honour the earth. You now have access to this clod whenever you need it. One fantastic way to work with it is as part of an oath meditation, which I will share with you now.

Oath Meditation

Choose a time in the evening to do this meditation. Make sure you will not be disturbed. If you have an altar, sit in front of it with the clod of earth in both hands. Now close your eyes. Imagine you are within the earth as a seed. Imagine how it feels to become roots and shoots within the earth. Now watch your seed grow. What has the seed become, what tree, plant, herb, are you? Once you feel the journey is complete, open your eyes and visualise yourself standing on an ancient stone, holding your clump of earth in your hand. What would you say? What and whom would you make your oath to? Then say out loud your oath to the ancestors of the north, sidhe of the east, spirit in all things to the south, and deities to the west; you pledge to them, to yourself, and to your community. Let the words flow. Be true to yourself, your people, your family and friends. Once finished, replace the earth back in its vessel and give thanks. Blessed Be.

From the earth to the elements, seasons, and fire festivals, which hold great memories of the distant past, to the trees, stones, and herbs that are not altered by human hands, in effect we are working together in this book to merge the teachings of the ancient ways of vision questing, rites of passage, and many other rituals combined with a deeper knowing philosophy of how we can better ourselves and increase our personal power. When we clear away our fears and doubts, we become the hollow bone, allowing the powerful energies of spirit, the ancestors, and elements to flow through us and magnify our personal power. For example, if our drains are blocked with gunge and the water backs up, we have a flood. The same with ourselves. If we don't keep our

personal energy clear and focused, we too become blocked. When we become the conduit of magickal powers from outside, coupled with our personal power, we amplify and intensify the flow. When two streams come together, they merge into a mighty river that flows to the sea, following the natural cycle of life. The same with the elements. A fire is not a fire unless there is a spark. You are that spark. Time to light your inner fire, time to feel the heat of the kitchen ...

Chapter Tips

When you clear away your fears and doubts, you allow the powerful energies of spirit, the ancestors, and the elements to flow through you and your tools to magnify your personal power. Within Scottish witchcraft, the ancestors ensured that their descendants knew this and could also connect with the spiritual essence that flowed throughout all creatures, plants, rocks, weather, and elements to master this energy for personal and communal benefits. So remember:

- A staff is a powerful conduit that works both ways; channelling energy from the skies, waters, and earth through it to you, but also channelling your power outward, which a staff can greatly amplify.
- Stone people are known as the ancient ones, the first people. They are revered as the first spirits to inhabit the earth. When we think of them, we connect to the ancient stone circles that were built during the Neolithic and Bronze ages.
- Ancient stones hold great power and wisdom. Many people feel protected by wearing them or living within stone dwellings. The hag stone or witches' stone got its name because of the wise old women using the stones for curing various ailments.
- They are very powerful when used against warding, banishment, and binding spells. You can also wear the witches' stone on your person to fend off negative energy directed at you. When you wear the stone on a red cord around your neck and dip it in well water as a charm, this will stop someone cursing you and also will stop nightmares.
- There are different methods of working with stones for healing; for example, black stones, once they have been purified, are used for drawing out illness. Once the illness is extracted, white stones are then placed on the body to replace lost energy, and then the healing takes place. You can use stones and crystals combined along with other natural tools such as feathers, etc. Always remember that the natural tools from nature are there to extract for you. This way you do not take on board another's illness into your body.
- The earth is a place of great stillness, learning, and reflection, a place where ideas can be heard and seeded. It offers spiritual stability and sustenance. Your clod of earth can be a physical source of inspiration and connection to all that keeps you grounded.
- The earth is literally the breeding ground for all living things. Therefore, it is important that in order for it to do its job to feed, nurture, cleanse, and protect, we need to ensure that we return to it all the right things—sacred or purified waters, foods, etc.—not waste that is full of excessive pollutants. We reap what we sow.

[contents]



The Witches' Kitchen

ow comes the time to focus on working with herbs and the learning about the folk who employed them. I know of many people who have thrown a few herbs together with other materials and wildly go about trying to create a spell or charm without the foundations behind it. It's not about impressing your will onto universal energy, as some witches believe; it's about you knowing your craft, and merging your wisdom and power with the understanding of how the ancestors, spirits, elementals, and nature work.

I started to learn from a very early age all about herbs and all the magickal things that could be created. Of course, at first, I was only interested in licking out the bowl when Winnie made Victoria sponge cake. I was only five years old, but for me it was magickal standing on a stool at her kitchen looking all around at the magickal objects, like something out of a *Harry Potter* film with old books and notes, herbs and dried flowers hanging from the ceiling, witches' herbal balls hanging from the window alongside candles, and a wooden box filled with herbs on the windowsill. An array of jars, bottles, tins, charms, teas, wines, spices, tinctures, and salves filled an entire wall. In the room next door was a hearth where she did all her baking and cooking with chairs surrounding the fire, and a big, solid wooden table where we ate. There was always a loaf of bread in the oven and one on the table.

Every morning Winnie would get up when the sun rose and would put on her big apron and go into the kitchen, which was her sacred space, while my great-grandfather went and opened the corner shop. The door was always open and there were always comings and goings all day long with people at the back door for medicines, lotions, salves, tinctures, and tonics. She also sold wines and beers and her breads and cakes. There was never a dull moment at her house. She also created spells and charms and was known as the local witch or wise woman. Superstition abounded in her house. Everything had a story. Each little ritual imbued everyday objects with either good or bad stories.

From the moment I woke up, I trod carefully around the house in case I knocked, tripped, or touched something and it was seen as a bad omen. I was not allowed to touch any of her things in her kitchen because it would bring bad luck. I was even afraid to cut bread for myself in case I cut it unevenly, especially because Winnie said if I did, I was telling lies. Maybe it was a way of stopping me from eating bread, butter, and jam, another of my favourite foods, when she was not looking. Whatever the reason was, it certainly worked. The number of times I had to toss salt over my shoulder, watch how I ate things, used my cutlery correctly, not walk under a ladder ... so much to remember for one so young. It was a game called "Superstition Minefield" with hundreds of clues to see if you could get through the day without being hexed by splitting the salt or opening an umbrella indoors, which would attract evil spirits into the house. Many of them sounded silly but I did not want to upset Winnie, as her hand was quick to cuff me across my legs if I did not get away fast enough.

Of course, a lot of the old wives' tales were true. These traditional oral beliefs have been handed down from generation to generation, sharing these sayings for a very good reason—to learn and grow from them. I learned and remembered all about the different herbs, foods, trees, animals. In fact just about everything in her day had a good or bad luck omen attached to it. What superstitions do you know, practice, or remember? A lot of these superstitions have been passed down from ancient times, from the Romans and Greeks. They have been changed to suit different traditions, cultures, and religions that work best for them.

The Power of Plant Medicine

We have focused on building up our personal power, learning many different ways of connecting to the elements and elementals, connecting to source, getting to know the places of spirit, and many other Scottish folklore traditions. Now it is time to connect to one of my greatest teachers: the herbs and trees that have shaped me and spoken to me through visions and dreams.

Many years ago, I was to undertake the journey to South America to meet the sacred plant teachers that, for me, was life-changing. I spent well over a year working with herbs and sacred plants throughout the Americas. I spent three months working with ayahuasca (the vine of the soul), cannabis, coca leaves, then San Pedro cactus. I then flew to Albuquerque where, at the petrol station filling up my rental car, I met a Peyote road man. On the plane from South America, I had asked for my next teacher. I spent three months with him working with salvia, cannabis, and jimsonweed.

Once I arrived back in the UK, I came home to end up working with all the different types of mushrooms, cacao, and iboga. At the top of Machu Picchu, my whole life changed in a flash as I was shown the world through

the eyes of the ancient teachers, using plant medicine. This divine medicine showed me the path to the truth and unravelled the knots of my soul and the hidden fragmented parts. I felt an emptiness in my heart and a desire to cease the monkey chatter mind. The medicines grounded me, integrated me into a whole new way of life. The spirits of the plants spoke to me, showed me how to release traumas and fears, remove the ego, die to the old me, and be rebirthed. I saw my patterns through visions and was shown how to journey to the original wounding of my soul.

This process is still ongoing. You cannot be enlightened by one experience or in one trip. It takes years and years of experience. You cannot take shortcuts to the top of a mountain, because they are the more dangerous hazardous path. I connected to my heart, my empty space filled, and the mind of chatter stopped. I finally grew up over the period of my forties and fifties and took personal responsibility for my words, actions, and deeds. After this intense journey, I fell ill and ended up in hospital, nearly dying of septicaemia. On Yule eve my friends were told that I had a fifty-fifty chance of living. That night I went through my living hell and saw all my previous lifetimes in addition to this one. It was not pleasant—the worst nightmare you can imagine. That whole process, from the travels to distant shores working with the plant medicine teachers back to the hospital in Plymouth, was my quest to awaken, change my soul's life purpose, and release forever all my trauma and fears. It worked and I am forever indebted to the plants and herbs who spoke to me, sang to me, and showed me the way home to my soul.

What has been your experience with working with the herb and plant teachers? Have you felt the call to work with plant medicine teachers or experienced healing with them? Write down how you feel about plant medicine in your BOS and, if inclined, make a note to find a teacher.

I now remember the first time I was profoundly affected by herbs. I attended my first sweat lodge when I was nineteen years old. I was in South Dakota. As I entered the lodge on my knees, the smell of sage hit me. It covered the entire floor. I went into a corner and the heat rushed to me and hit me in waves. I had never experienced anything like it before. As they brought the grandfather stones into the lodge, it reached an unbearable heat. I started crying and weeping and thought I could not stand this anymore. Then I heard a soft voice saying, "Come to me. I will heal you. Lie down on the sage and breathe me in." I did so. And as I did, I felt safe, at peace, and the heat did not affect me any longer. I sank into a deep journey as I was taken to a place on the land with sage growing. It felt like I was at home, at peace with all there was. I was home. I saw the spirit of Grandmother Sage come to me and wrap her arms around me. The next thing I knew I was back in the lodge and the prayers were finished and the flap opened. This was the start of my journey with Ed McGaa, Eagle Man, my Lakota teacher.

With Ed, I learned smudging and purification with the four sacred herbs of sweetgrass to the north, tobacco to the east, cedar to the south, and sage to the west. I was taught to honour and revere them and use them in a sacred way. This is the Lakota way and it taught me about respect, bravery, generosity, and wisdom.

To this day, I still work with white Californian sage from Turtle Island, mugwort native to my lands, Palo Santo from South America, and amber resin from Egypt. In our Scottish traditions, we use saining to bless and ward our homes, people, and rituals. I was shown by Swein how to use water from a sacred well or running stream. He would go around his home sprinkling the water from a small container from the front door to the back door. When I visited my grandmother Meiklejohn who lived in Caithness, she would burn juniper (*Juniperus*) or lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*) and sometimes heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), but I found it too much for me as it would totally smoke out the whole farm. There are the different types of herbs I have used around the world on my travels for saining or purification. Most of them are used for removing negative energy, balancing, renewal, healing, calming, or a good night's sleep. I would suggest you try as many herbs as possible and see which ones resonate with you. My favourites include mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*), sage (*Salvia officinalis*), cedar (*Cedrus*), and cinnamon (*Cinnamomum*).

Awakening the Kitchen Witch Within

In this book I have shared with you my stories of working with many Scottish wisdom keepers and seers. They gave me a great foundation for the work I do today. I have travelled all over the world working with tribes to find out the Old Ways of healing, herbs, and divination. It's important that we learn from these wise ones because our societies today cannot cope with the influx of sick people, those who are turned out onto the streets to sleep rough because they have mental problems. If we were still within a clan or tribal system, these people would have been seen as sacred, a direct link to the gods. Now they are shunned, locked away, or given medication to forget who they are. Now is the time for each of you to take on this sacred responsibility of working with your communities. You might be a nurse, health care professional, herbalist, seer, psychic, healer, or teacher. What can you do to expand your knowledge and wisdom and awaken the witch within?

This next part of this chapter is focused on Scottish plant lore, herbs, poultices, salves, and lotions. Winnie taught me many basics that can be used with all the natural products you can find in the kitchen. Winnie was a kitchen witch, combining the kitchen, the hearth, and home together. She used magick, old wives' lore, enchantment, the roots of the craft. Everyone gathered together by the hearth to listen to tales, songs, and poetry. There were always people in the house cooking, laughing, and sharing, which I do believe are the true foundations of a kitchen witch. From creating her charms, lotions, salves, teas, and tonics that had been handed

down to her from a sacred lineage of ancestors, well-being and love oozed out of the kitchen. Winnie served her community with shared blessings, believing that happy memories were the most important gifts you could give to yourself or other people.

Every time I drink nettle tea, I think of the times we went out gathering them together as she showed me how to wildcraft the nettles. I remember Winnie collecting the nettles. She would look for a good patch, then start singing to the plant, then approach it and speak, saying, "Greetings, grandmother, I wish to harvest your leaves to make tea and use them to heal others. May I do so." She would then stand and recite a charm. Then once she got the okay, she collected the leaves and the seeds as well. She always left an offering of bird seeds, bread, or other food. Once she had given the gift, she would sing another of her songs.

It's important when going out to wildcraft (gathering/foraging) that you follow a few simple tips to keep nature in balance and not over-wildcraft. When it comes to harvesting your herbs, first you must focus on which herb you wish to wildcraft. What do you want to do with the herb, make a tea, wine, herbal remedy, salve, poultice? What is your intended purpose? It's important you are not just going out to pick some herbs. Also make sure the herb you are looking for is not endangered. Please ensure that there is an abundance of the herb, plant, or even the weed. It's important to know the moon phases and the meaning of each day as you work and bond with our herbal ancestors. This ancient tradition has been handed down and preserved for a very good reason. Our ancestors knew when to gather, plant, and harvest and what seasons to do so in. It all depends on the season as to which part of the plant you harvest. Roots are traditionally gathered in the early spring or in the autumn when the leaves of the trees are starting to fall and the plants are starting to die back. Gather leaves of the plant when they are fresh and newly formed. The best time to gather berries is after the first frost, all depending where you are in the world. Flowers are best gathered when they are just opening. Gather tree leaves just as they are falling off. Never gather bark off the trunk of a tree—make sure it's from the branches, and always ask permission.

It's always good to go and scout the area out before you go wildcrafting to get an idea of terrain and any hazards or animals to beware of. Please also ensure you will not affect nature by disturbing a natural habitat or any animal burrows or taking away a source of food for other beings. Make sure the patch you are wishing to harvest from is not near a road or main hiking trail. Also ensure they have not been sprayed by any pesticides or chemicals. If you can, harvest as early in the day as possible. Make sure they have dried off from any rain or overnight mist or dew. Also, it's important not to harvest before it gets too hot. It's also important to wildcraft before they start to flower. You can also deadhead the flowers so that new shoots and leaves continue.

On the day you are going into nature, ask the spirits of the land if it is a good day to harvest, then ask the herb or plant the same question. If you are in doubt, please don't just pick! Once you get a yes, ensure you have the correct tools, specially designed for wildcrafting. You can purchase proper harvest cutlery, or you can purchase a boline knife. This is a white-handed ritual knife. Also make sure you have an opened wicker basket and a pair of gloves. It's important that the knife has been cleansed, consecrated, and sained over. If you follow the traditions of faery moon harvesting, please ensure that when harvesting you only use either stone, bone, crystals, flint, or metal as long as it's not iron. You may already know where you are going to harvest, but if you don't ask the local witch or local people, they will know where to go and find your chosen herb. Once you arrive at the chosen wood, forest, or open land, before you step onto the land, stand at the threshold and ask permission of the spirits of the land and the sidhe. Once given, leave an offering at the threshold. Try to ensure that you walk with care so as to not disturb nature. Once you arrive at your chosen patch of herbs, make sure they are looking healthy. You might find you have to look around at various patches before you choose one. Speak with the plant, sing if you wish, whatever feels right in your heart. I find sitting on the earth beside the plant helps greatly.

Now sitting down, connect with the herb by placing your hand on the leaf or stem or roots. Close your eyes and connect with the grandmother of the herb. Then you can say hello. Let the plant know who you are. It might feel a bit strange at first. Ask permission of the herb. You will know. You might feel it in the air if a sudden breeze picks up. Use your intuition. Once you get a yes, harvest mindfully of what you are taking. Try to take the top part so the plant can continue to grow. Also work in different patches, only taking what is needed. Once you have finished, give an offering to the plant. If I am in hot countries, I always give the gift of water. It's an exchange of energy. You can give a prayer, words, thanks, a gift of seeds, and food for the animals. It's also important, if you can, to replant the herb. Once you are finished, make sure you leave no trace of your footsteps. As you leave the sacred space, call on the spirits of land and place to assist you with the work you are about to do.

When you get home, gently wash the herbs in spring water or well water if possible. Try not to use tap water, as it's full of chemicals. Then remove any dead or spoilt bits on leaves. Place them on paper towels. Once you have done this, tie the herbs in loose bundles so that the air circulates around all the herbs. Use small paper bags—Winnie used brown paper bags, put holes in the bags, and left the stems sticking out of the bag. She then hung the herbs in the kitchen on the dryer, normally used for the washing, and also the shed. It needs to be in a dry warm area, making sure they are out of the sun. Winnie also sometimes put them in the attic. It takes from three to five weeks for them to dry out. Make sure you check them periodically. Today there are modern fan-assisted ovens, food dehydrators, and microwave ovens that assist in quickening the process. I like to oven-dry the herbs. You can also dry seeds this way. Once dry, shake the seeds from the seed heads. Once done, make sure the chaff or capsules are detached from the seeds. Place the seeds in sealed containers. Make sure they are

totally dry. Winnie used to pop them in the oven to make sure they were totally dry and so that they were not mouldy. She then kept them in the pantry, in a cool dark room, or hung up.

It's a lot of time and energy to take on the process of preparing the herbs, oils, and plants, and it is okay if you don't have the time to harvest the herbs and plants yourself. You can buy herbs that are already dried, cut up, and powered. The only thing I would say is be careful when buying roots. Make sure you purchase them from a good shop or store. Make sure they are ethical or visit your nearest herb shop and speak to your local herbalist. It's important that you know the difference between each herb. I remember Winnie making me smell each jar and telling me which herb was which. She also used to blindfold me and hold the jars. It was a great way of keeping me busy and out of mischief. It was using my intuition, my sense of smell, and seeing then with my eyes.

We must ensure for generations to come that they are available to all. Each of one these amazing herbs and plants is unique and has both medicinal and magickal properties, but I want to stress at this point that using herbs in spellwork and charms amongst other things is amazing, but they kill as well as heal. It takes years to study as a herbalist, sometimes whole lifetimes. You need to have the knowledge and the know-how. It's important to do your research thoroughly before embarking on changing your life and the lives of others. It's also important that you do not ingest any herbs or plants unless you have spoken to your doctor if you are on medication. I would also suggest you speak to your local herbalist or homeopath. At all times, ensure they are kept safe, in a container away from children, so as not to be ingested by them.

Scottish Herbs

Winnie told me to be proud of my Highland heritage as well as the Irish and Viking warrior blood that flows through my veins. She told me that she learned how to work with each herb from her grandmother by holding them in her hands or sitting beside them and listening to their song. She told her that her mother and grandmother passed on this tradition to her. They all said the same thing—the herbs taught them! They also said that those who took the herbs from the land they were born on worked well, that they were from the same earth, same ancestral line.

I have selected the herbs that I know and have worked with in spellwork, charms, and healing. The Highlanders have been using herbs from both the land of Scotland and also from other cultures that were brought over with the invaders and travellers for hundreds if not thousands of years. I connect with each herb and plant personally, meditate with each one individually, as if they were my friends, listening, sharing each precious moment. No two herbs, flowers, trees, or plants are alike. Enjoy exploring the green path as we look at some of these wonderful offerings a little closer.

Apple

I was shown how to do divination with an apple by cutting it in half showing the five-pointed star. Once open with the two halves in either hand, look at the left hand for the past. If the seeds are whole, it means all past issues are solved. If one seed is damaged, it means someone from your past is coming back into your life. If, however, all the seeds are damaged, misfortune was about to occur. Then looking at the right hand, if all the seeds are whole it means good fortune. If one seed is damaged, look out for someone coming into your life that could cause trouble. If all are damaged, beware of a family quarrel or issues with land or money.

You can also use an apple on your natural altar to represent the pentagram and protection. I was also taught to peel the apple skin off in one go, in one piece, in front of a mirror. Then I take it and throw it over my left shoulder and look at the initials that form. The initials were of my true love to come. Apple is known as knowledge from the story of the garden of Eden. Apples actually symbolize rebirth, youth, and healing. Apples must be left on the tree after Samhain to feed the spirits. "An apple a day keeps the doctor away" is a great saying my mother always said to me when she wanted me to eat fruit as a child. I always replied, "Chocolate does that also." The fruits have wonderful anti-diarrhoea and laxative properties. Crushed clean apple leaves can be applied to minor wounds. They are wonderful as apple cider and apple cider vinegar. Baked apples sooth a sore throat. You can also make dried apple chips, apple sauce, juice, jams, and jellies.

Thistle (Silybum marianum)

When I think of the thistle, I hear the song of the unofficial national anthem of Scotland called "Flower of Scotland." The thistle became a national emblem of Scotland after the Battle of Largs. The Vikings decided to surprise the Scottish clansmen under the cover of darkness. They took off their leather shoes but as they crept nearer, they stood on a patch of thistles, alerting the Scots. The mighty thistle saved the day. In 1540, the order of the thistle was created by King James V. He and his twelve knights wore a badge saying "No one harms me without punishment."

For protection for your house, hang dried thistles over the front door. Carrying the dried thistle in your purse or pocket or on your person wards off the evil eye and protects. It's a great tonic, as milk thistle clears out the liver from toxins and alcohol. It can also be used for gall bladder diseases, hepatitis, mushroom poisoning, and many other ailments. It's also used as a wonderful heart tonic. For cooking, thistles taste just like spinach. Make sure the spiky leaves come off first; don't eat them. They are best used in the spring. The roots of the thistle

make a tea for treating catarrh. You can also use simmered juice after cooking the leaves for ulcers and roast the seeds and use as a coffee substitute. Thistle is so versatile: food, tonics, teas, salves, room sprays, oil, the list is endless.

Heather (Calluna vulgaris)

I used to enjoy going out on the moors on a misty morning to wash my face in the dew and pick the heather. Winnie told me that the best heather to be used was the tops and that they should be gathered at dawn for that is when it has the greatest magickal properties. My dad told me the best white heather grows only on the grave of a faery, but I never found any graves and I did look on the top of Tomnahurich Cemetery (the faery hill in Inverness). At every wedding I attended in the Highlands, all the men wore heather sprays on the left-hand side of their jackets. It is also used in bridal bouquets to bring good luck to the bride and groom and bless the family and marriage.

I can still remember seeing the gypsies selling lucky heather in baskets in the streets of Inverness and having my fortune told. It is said that the Picts made ale from heather without using hops, and today ale is still being made in Scotland using the same techniques as the ancestors once used. They used the heather to sleep on and stuffed the mattresses with heather when wool or feathers were not available. Many soldiers in the Highlands preferred to sleep on the heather to bring them good luck. Heather tea is wonderful for sleep and for nursing mothers to increase nurse milk. Winnie used to make it for me when I had nightmares. She also used the flower heads to make poultices for headaches as well as a hot poultice for chilblains. She also made a heather salve for her father's rheumatism. She also extracted the juice from the heather tips for those people that came to her with depression, heart complaints, and many other conditions. My dad suffered with gout and said that the extract from the heather helped the pain. Heather comes in many forms including teas, extracts, tinctures, dried flowers, essences, heather honey, soaps, hand creams, and shampoos.

Dandelion (Taraxacum officinale)

I could not wait to go out into nature when the dandelion was ready to seed. I would stand in a field full of dandelions and make lots and lots of wishes. Winnie told me that blowing on the seeds would bring me lots of luck and that I was sharing love all over the world. My dad said that if you see a dandelion seed floating through the air not to catch it because it is a faery. He said that the faeries were bringing into the house good luck. If they are placed into a wedding bouquet, they are for good luck. Also, if you dream of this herb, it will bring you good relationships in everything you do. The dandelion seeds represent wishes, divination, faithfulness, childhood, summer, joy, and hope.

In the autumn before the herb flowers, you can take the flowers, leaves, and roots before the plant begins to die. It's important to note that it cannot be used if you have gall bladder problems. You can use the roots and the leaves for tea. Winnie used to use the milky sap on warts and it does work. She also used it as a salad as well with onions, lemon juice, and some sea salt. One cup of greens has iron, omega-3 fatty acids, and protein. It is very good to use the herb for those who do not have an appetite. The leaves are packed with lots of vitamins, calcium, magnesium, and zinc. The leaf is a diuretic and can help in weight loss without side effects. Wonderful for urinary tract infections. If you take the dandelion leaf, it reduces cholesterol, helping you to control blood pressure as well.

Nettles (Lamium album)

I was forever falling into nettle beds when I was younger, but fortunately my dad had shown me where the dock leaves were to stop the stinging. He taught me that where nettles are found so too are the faery dwellings nearby. He also told me if I got stung that the sting was protecting me from faery mischief. In the Highlands, nettle cloth was woven and Winnie said that it was more durable than other cloths. This wonderful herb can be hung at the threshold as a guardian herb to protect the household. It is also known that nettles were used for protection against "elf shot" from the sidhe. Those who had mysterious pains that came on all of a sudden or animals who suddenly became ill were thought to be bewitched by the faery folk. I have attended faery festivals and seen people wearing nettle clothing to protect themselves. The one thing you don't want to do is what the Romans did, which was to flail themselves with nettles to keep warm. If you do want to try it out, I would suggest you make sure you have a plentiful supply of dock leaves if it does not work or, in the USA, lamb's quarters. Nettle soup was always made for Shrove Tuesday to welcome in the spring.

They can be gathered in early spring when the first shoots are ready. You can also gather them before they flower. It's important if you can to wear gardening gloves or rubber gloves. Nettles do have an acid that burns the skin. Once finished, make sure to wash the gloves, making sure you don't get stung. You can lay the nettles on a tray to wilt because once they have wilted, they cannot sting you. Please ensure you always cook nettles. This is another herb that is packed with loads of minerals. Wonderful as a nettle tea to decrease oxidative stress. I use it to relieve my chronic pain as it has amazing analgesic effects. It also fights off infections and has antiviral, antibacterial, and antifungal effects. The extract is very effect for decreasing inflammation. Also very good for helping reduce high blood sugar. Nettle juice is also very good for stopping nosebleeds. You can also use the dried leaves to sain for clearing of bronchitis. From tea, juice, soups, salves, poultice, drops, extract,

dried, infusion, oil, the list is endless for this amazing herb that many people see as a weed. Try using them in endless ways of cooking from green smoothies, to soups, with pasta as a substitute for spinach recipes.

These are just a few of the herbs that I use that Winnie and my dad taught me about. Now I present a list (I could fill a book just of Scottish herbs and their folklore) that you can work with and investigate. One of my favourite series on television is *Outlander*. In the series, Claire Fraser uses many from the list below to heal. The Highlanders were renowned for their healing abilities and were used by the common people. It was their way of life and without the knowledge they could not survive from birth to death. There were many widespread beliefs of herbs, some of which today have been disproven, but on the whole they work and are being used more so today than ever before. This is because people are looking into natural ways of healing with plants and nature.

Commonly Used Herbs in Scotland

The ground in Scotland is rich and fertile. What follows is a selection of herbs that have been used throughout the centuries. Some are indigenous and others have been brought in from overseas. Without them, we would be lost in a sea of plastic, synthetics, and chemicals in a metal jungle devoid of nature herself. Enjoy researching and discovering what our ancestors knew and handed down to us: ash (Fraxinus), birch (Betula), bitter vetch (Lathyrus linifolius), blackberry (Rubus fruticosus), blackthorn (Prunus spinosa), bog myrtle (Myrica gale), bog violet (Viola palustris), borage (Borago officinalis), burdock (Arctium), butterwort (Pinguicula), calendula (Calendula officinalis), centaury (Centaurea), club Moss (Lycopodiopsida), comfrey (Symphytum), elder (Sambucus), fern (Polypodiopsida), gooseberry (Ribes uva-crispa), hawthorn (Crataegus), hazel (Corylus avellana), herb Robert (Geranium robertianum), ivy (Hedera helix), juniper (Juniperus), lady's mantle (Alchemilla vulgaris), mint (Lamiaceae), mistletoe (Loranthaceae), wild white mustard (Sinapis alba), oak (Quercus robur), Scots pine (Pinus sylvestris), puffball (Lycoperdon perlatum), rose (Rosa acicularis), rowan (Sorbus aucuparia), St. John's wort (Hypericum perforatum), willow (Salix alba), yarrow (Achillea millefolium), yew (Taxus baccata).

If tomorrow we were to lose power on our planet, we could still heal the sick, stem bleeds and wounds, deal with most illnesses, and deliver children. Our ancestors got through battles using herbs and so can we. The biggest battle today is not losing the battle to keep on working with nature's great teachers. The path of the green is calling you to stand up and be the protectors of this beautiful earth. So mote it be.

Healing with Poultices

During World War II, with a lack of allopathic medicines, Winnie and her mother survived by gathering herbs to heal in this time of trouble. They baked fresh bread every morning to ensure that they had a ready-made poultice (a soft moist mass, often heated and medicated, that is spread on cloth over the skin), just in case. They mostly used foods that could be planted, from onions and potatoes to cabbage and carrots. They also used salt, honey, mustard, sugar, oats, and barley, along with nettles, dandelion, chickweed, burdock, and calendula that were freely available. These wise women knew how to make poultices using everyday basic ingredients found in nature or the kitchen pantry. The benefits of using a poultice is that the herbs and foods are fresh.

Different Types of Poultices

- Bread and Milk: Drawing poultices are used to draw out glass or metal shards, thorns and splinters as well. Winnie used a mixture of grated soap and sugar as a soft paste. It worked every time. My favourite that I use a lot of the time is bread and milk. You mush the bread and milk together and drain out the excess milk until it's like a paste then apply. Fantastic for boils, infections in the fingers, or for a whitlow.
- Dandelions, Onions, and Bananas: For insect stings and bites, use crushed raw dandelion combined with apple cider vinegar; it works a treat. You can also use raw onions for making an onion paste to treat the stings and bites. Another quick easy way is using a banana skin. Just rub the skin onto the bite.
- **Cabbage:** Winnie used to help breastfeeding mothers by using a cool cabbage leaf poultice. She would chop the cabbage into a mass and then apply to the breasts and then put a bra on top. Very messy but it works. A cabbage poultice works very well for shingles, varicose veins, and many other illnesses.
- Oats and Barley: When I had the measles, my mother made me get in an oatmeal bath. It was horrible and I could not wait to get out of it. Oatmeal contains a compound called avenanthramide that reduces inflammation. It's interesting to note that the Romans brought oats to this country. Mix the uncooked plain oatmeal with water, preferably well or spring water. When you have a paste-like consistency, apply to the itchy area. Really good for eczema as well as other skin complaints.
- Carrots: This wonderful poultice is great for drawing toxins from the body. Great for healing colds and sore throats. Works well around the neck for drawing out swollen glands and your lymphatic system. Also great for bruising and muscle problems.
- **Honey:** Use on burns, bacterial infections, and infected wounds. Make sure the honey is the best you can find and spread over the wound evenly. You can also buy honey wound dressings as it has been proven that the properties of the honey work in healing wounds.
- Mustard: This poultice has been used for hundreds of years, dating back to Roman times. It's used for lung congestion, swelling, and inflammation. When making the poultice, ensure the paste is not runny. You should

place it between two pieces of cloth so that the mustard does not come in direct contact with the skin.

To give it a go yourself, gather the herbs or the food you are going to use. Try to make sure that the ingredients are as fresh as possible as they have the active ingredients needed to ensure the healing effect of the plants. Have at hand a porous material, such as cheesecloth, gauze, muslin, or a cotton handkerchief. I have sometimes used crepe bandages as well, especially if the wound, boil, or whitlow is in a difficult place. Mash the ingredients into a pulp, ensuring they are moist. You can apply either cold or warm poultices to the area needing treatment. Once the poultice is applied to the area with the cloth on top, secure the poultice with an extra bandage or strip of material so that it will be secure. If using a hot poultice, make sure you have enough material in place to keep the heat in. Leave the poultice in place until the ingredients have dried out or cooled down. You can replace the poultice if required every four hours.

During the wars, my ancestors were able to treat those who were affected in the bombing raids. They lived in the south of England, having come over from Ireland to find work. With the skills and the knowledge they possessed working with the herbs, they became first aiders in the very true sense of the term. Those who had burns or wounds were all taken care of by these amazing women. In peace times, they helped treat skin conditions, aches and pains, boils, and chest congestion. I would love to see a herbal first aid clinic in every town and city to assist the medical services who are now under such pressure by the overcrowding of hospitals.

It's time for us all to try to be as self-sufficient as possible. Enjoy the endless possibilities of what you can achieve when working with the herbs, trees, plants, flowers, and vegetables—the abundance that Mother Nature has gifted us. Honour her today by reciting the following:

Earth mother, we give thanks to thee for the abundant gifts we see.
In nature, fields, and forests grow, the roots, water, and stones that know.
Trees of power and flowers which bloom, herbs that heal from mother's womb.
Tables spread with foods that nurture, grateful now we will preserve Her.
With lotions and potions, salves and tinctures, get ready now, time for adventures.
The green path awaits the witch within, now it is time, so let's begin.
So mote it be.

With all you have learned, discovered, practiced, and revealed, we look now to the practical application of Scottish witchcraft—the charms and spells—and to the cunning folk and healers who brought it to the masses.

Chapter Tips

Imagine being just like Winnie, having a kitchen full of remedies, wines and teas, syrups and soups, and all the baking and cooking. Then there are the poultices and salves, tinctures and extracts for healing. The list is endless. Many of us all over the world are experiencing severe weather conditions. Having a kitchen stocked up with herbal remedies and herbs will ensure that if anyone was unwell, you could have within your home all you need to heal. Most of us rely on supermarkets and pharmacies for our food and medication. Our ancestors lived a more natural way of life, so consider the following:

- If you have ever used hallucinogenic medicines—divine medicine—in a sacred way, what kind of experiences have you had? Have the sacred plants talked to you, showed you how to heal, to feel, to see? They can show you the path to the truth and unravel the knots of your soul and the hidden fragmented parts if you let them. The spirits of the plants will speak to you, show you how to release traumas and fears, remove the ego, die to the old you and be rebirthed. Remember if you are planning to do this, always seek to do it in a safe way with a trusted source of plant medicine.
- You cannot be enlightened by one experience or in one trip. It takes years and years of experience to releasing fear, old patterns, and brainwashing.
- In Scottish traditions, saining is used to bless and ward homes, people, and rituals. Do you use saining in your day-to-day life? Which herbs do you use?
- Herbs can be used for removing negative energy, balancing, renewal, healing, calming, and a good night's sleep. Do you use herbs every day? Do you have a witch's kitchen? Have you always wanted to study herbalism? If you have studied it, do you help your communities?
- Queens and princesses of ancient cultures had to know all about the deities, prayers, invocations, and herbs; it was their sacred duty. The priestesses of the temples were the healers and the midwives and the oracles. Do you come from a long line of healers? Do you use prayers, connections to the deities, or invocations when working with herbs and spells?

- A kitchen witch wildcrafts plants and herbs to make poultices, salves, lotions, teas, and charms. It takes years to study as an herbalist, sometimes lifetimes. You need to have the knowledge and the know-how. Are you prepared to work and study hard for this ancient craft of healing?
- If tomorrow all the shops closed, do you have the necessary herbs, lotions and potions, fresh fruits, and plants that would ensure that if anyone was unwell you could have within your home all you need to heal? One day it might come to that. Be prepared! Be ready, for your family, friends, and communities will need you—if not in your lifetime, in your children's lifetime. Plant now the seeds that you will need to keep your future generations safe.



Spellcasters and Spells

nce upon this ancient land lived the cunning folk. They were known by different names such as a spaewife, wiseman, or wise woman, even faery doctor. They worked their magick, prepared herbal remedies, created charms and spells, and foretold the future. They knew how to remove curses and evil spirits and banish witches. It was seen by the common people that the cunning folk and midwives were practical and that the witches were destructive. But King Henry VIII changed all that when he introduced the Witchcraft Act of 1542. Both the cunning folk and the witches were classed as one, with the death penalty enforced for both, so during the different reigns of kings and queens that followed, the magickal practices of the cunning folk hung in the balance.

Many were protected by the villagers, for they knew if the cunning folk were put to death they would not have their healers and midwives. Cunning folk came from a hereditary line of wise men and women who passed down the knowledge of herbs, charms, and spells from mother to daughter or father to son. They were the glue that held the communities together. Nearly every village or town had a charmer. Without them the village would fall apart. As one village in Perthshire found out, when they removed their cunning woman, due to her dementia, and stated she was a witch, there was nobody left to help them. Not a clever thing to do when the next village was fifty miles away. These men and women were also employed to cast love, money, and bewitchment spells and create specific charms for the nobility. These charms were worn in secret, left in the home sometimes, sewn into curtains or clothing, all to ensure that the charm could not be found and incriminate a person for practicing witchcraft. Cunning folk were also known for locating lost property, animals, or jewellery. Before the introduction of judges and the courts, cunning folk were sought after to divine whether a person was guilty or not.

They were experts in the workings of plant medicine, known to some as "wort cunning." They worked with the crops and weather. They were highly regarded as wisdom keepers working with nature, the seasons, the moon, and the cycles of life. Back in those days their job was to fight witchcraft, heal sickness caused by the witches, and remove curses and spells placed upon good folk. This basically demonstrates the difference between a white witch, as they were sometimes known, and a black witch, who worked against the good of the people and the whole community. When we look at the history of witches in the Highlands of Scotland there is hardly any reference to the terrible things their English counterparts were accused of. Those deemed "black witches," who plied their gifts more like an unscrupulous trade (and there were some), had a knowledge of charms, rhymes, and spells and how to put the fear of death into people. They used their knowledge for ill gain, and for the most part they were self-serving, jealous, and bitter of others' wealth. In those days, if you claimed to have supernatural powers and could control outcomes, many believed it. Many witches who were killed did not care what they said or did even though the threat of persecution hung over them. They did not work for the good of the community and ostracised themselves away from the villagers, causing great harm along the way to those who got in their way. The spae-wife, on the other hand, practiced white or good magick. They worked with the second sight, divination, healing, and plant lore with integrity of wisdom and the flow of nature working through them. They had spent years and years of hard work refining and learning their craft. They worked in the university of nature, ensuring that they listened well to the people, the land, and the elements all around.

The wise man or woman in past times had the connection with the spirits. They were in fact very much like a shaman is today. Their gifts were handed down from generation to generation. They travelled to the other worlds and connected with the spirits and otherworldly beings. They travelled to the other worlds to retrieve children and people taken by the unseen forces and returned them home. They were able to diagnose otherworldly illnesses and effect a cure. They were able to track into an illness and diagnose a cure for those who were ill. They helped locate lost items and cure animals.

They were and are the multitaskers of yesterday and today. It's interesting to note that back in those times that they were paid! The townspeople knew that it was important to ensure that these wise men and women were sustained within the local villages by paying them with money or goods. Today, many people question why people charge for the gifts of healing, but our ancestors were respected and accepted that it was important to do so, as an exchange of energy and so they could survive. The ancestral cunning folk, like today's descendants, worked and learned hard their craft. If anyone ever questions why you charge for healings, if you're a professional healer, simply say, "You are paying for my experience."

Like many of us today, they multitasked in their chosen field. They were eclectic by their very nature, weaving what they had learned from their teachers and other sources available to them at the time. The wise woman or man's philosophies were different across the lands of Great Britain. Today remains the same, although there is a far greater store of knowledge learned throughout the world. This is not something you can buy off the internet and learn in a weekend. The wise ones are solitary by nature, fine tuning their skills, forever learning something new. They live by the code of the land by harming none and doing what they will to ensure the good of all. This craft is in every bone of your body, all the blood that flows through you, and all the wisdom of your heart that calls you home.

When looking back into the ancient past, we find that great healers and scholars such as Hippocrates took a holistic approach to well-being. They looked at the whole aspect of the mind, the body, and the soul. They had a deep understanding of herbs and medicines and how they interacted with all levels of a person's being. Delving deeper still, in Mesopotamia in the thirteenth century BC, women were the chemists. In these ancient cultures from Egypt, Greece, and Rome, the women were the healers created by the goddesses. The queens and princesses of these ancient cultures had to know all about the deities, prayers, invocations, and herbs; it was their sacred duty. The priestesses of the temples were the healers and the midwives and the oracles. They were known as "she who knows the inside." Then everything changed and slowly but surely, they were demoted, hidden, scorned as one religion, one medicine, one god replaced the goddesses of old. This ancient wisdom, once revered as sacred and gifted from the gods, was stripped from the women and disappeared underground. Many laws were passed. The curing of sickness by occult magick was in some cases punishable by death. The history of women healers has gone from the goddess to the sorceresses to the witches.

What was it that put such great fear into mankind that stopped women being healers? It spread all through the planet and women were forced into backstreet alleys to do their work. But the tide has turned and now the craft is returning, authentic, and pure of intent. And perhaps the part of the craft that appeals and confuses, in equal measure these days, is spellwork. The time has come to look at the spellwork that sits at the heart of Scottish witchcraft.

The Art of Spellcasting

Across the globe and from our first breath, wise men and women have been using their personal power and their profound connection to the ancestors, elementals, deities, spirits of place, and all living things to create a cone of power that held and sustained both themselves and their communities. The history of magick and spells between cultures, belief systems, and religions is varied depending on location (the environment plays a huge part) and the tools available. Traditionally in most cultures, spellcasting was handed down from mother to daughter orally. Spells that were written down were always hidden or coded. Magickal manifestation work was reverently honoured, but through the ages the safe practice of spellcasting changed dramatically; monastic religion and medieval superstition played their part. The use of magick and spellcasting had to be hidden as fear, doubt, ridicule, and death overshadowed the once-favoured healing craft of spellwork.

But today, as the accusations of yesteryear are healed, a magickal resonance surges throughout our very modern world, invoking all those with a natural magick and curiosity in their hearts and souls to awaken to the Old Ways. By magickally working with the mystical forces and cycles of nature, in conjunction with ancient wisdom, knowing, and honour, we have the power to create and manifest a positive life of love, happiness, and prosperity for ourselves and the world around us. Now you have the ability to carry on the work of your ancestors. What an exciting challenge to undertake—a trip into the unknown that very few walk upon. I know you have the ability to do so. You have the passion of your spirit linked to the ancient ones. You will never fall off the green path. You have all the tools, all the abilities, within you. Now it is time to put it to practice.

So, let us start with charms. Charms are generally associated with magickal objects, but it is a term that actually can be used to refer to all magickal words, invocations, or songs, that have been recited for protection or spellwork. You may wish to use charms (the object type) in your spells, like a coin, pentagram, pendant, or a four-leaf clover. There is always a direct relationship to the spell you are creating and the charm. Once you have created your spell, a charm is then empowered through the magickal process. You can also wear the charm on your person or place it on your altar.

Charms have been used since ancient times as amulets and talismans. The first known people to wear charms were the Babylonians, Persians, and Hittites. In Egypt charms were worn to identify a person to the gods in the afterlife. The Romans and Greeks wore charm bracelets with little rolls of paper tied on to protect them. On many battlefields in Scotland and Ireland when the warriors were close to death and nothing could be done, charms and incantations were said, and amulets placed on them to help them transition to the other worlds. Today many people wear charms on their person without realising the meaning, magick, and history behind them. It is a tool, much like a staff or dirk, that can be used for spellwork.

A spell on the other hand is a powerful and sacred ritual of action that combines the ingredients of the use of magickal tools, symbols, elements, and recipes with positive thoughts or words of intent to create a powerful effect. Once your focus is honed fully, it is possible to use the power of creating and manifesting by thought and visualisation alone. Magickal spells are powered by personal positive energy, desire, belief, faith, emotion, and an awareness to change and cast a desired effect. With unwavering focus and intent, spellwork harnesses and

manipulates energy and the magickal forces needed to bring about anything from healing and prosperity to walking toward one's destiny.

Before casting a spell, you must decide on what the purpose of the spell is and be extremely clear about what it is you want. As you make a statement of intent, you are instructing the universe that you wish to effect change for yourself, and for the good of all. Or use your imagination, your visualisation abilities, to picture clearly in your mind all that you wish to magickally manifest. Ensure that you leave any problems, doubts, insecurities, or negativity at your front door before you start. Magick needs personal and powerful energy in order to work. So, stand confidently in your power as you invoke the divine spark, to ignite the magick of your spells. Consider now, what sacred work do you wish to undertake? Do you wish to combine all the gifts given to us and work as the ancients once did? What follows now are the basic considerations for spellcasting—get to know them well until they become second nature. You would do well to make a note of them in you Book of Shadows too ...

Tips for Spellcasting

- Control is the first step to spellcasting, so practice energy raising, meditation, shielding, purification, changing, and enchanting objects. And never do spells if you are feeling tired or rundown. You need to be confident in what you are doing.
- Determine your goal and focus. Your state of mind needs to be clear. Speak your words with positive intentions; never use negative words. Follow directions carefully.
 - Ensure your spell is realistic and that you have the right ingredients ready.
- Timing is key. Learn about the moon cycles and their influences, the days of the week, and the seasons (all listed in your BOS). So, choose your magickal time purposefully, depending on which type of spell you wish to cast.
 - Allow enough time for the spell to work. Spellcasting takes time, sometimes a whole moon cycle.
- Take responsibility for your spells. What you give out does come back to you. Remember magick takes the path of least resistance.
- Remember the Threefold Law—whatever you give out comes back to you threefold. This ancient rule of the Old Ways is based on the Universal Law of Cause and Effect. So, your magickal intention must always be done "with harm to none," including yourself.
 - Believe, believe!

Preparing Your Spell

Working with, and adhering to, specific times, moon phases, directions, and elements for your chosen spell will enhance your magickal work. However, if you desperately need to cast a spell and can't wait for a certain moon phase, weekday, etc., you can still work your magick as long as you gather all your ingredients and tools, cast your circle, and wholly focus your intention on what it is you need to achieve. It may not be as powerful right away, but will work nonetheless, depending on your intentions and energy.

The moon is considered to be one of the most powerful forces when working with spells. It affects the tides, weather, animal behaviour, plants, and even our own moods and feelings. We too are ruled by the phases of the moon, particularly women, who reflect the cycles during their "moon time." It's important to create your own unique way of spellcasting to find out what works best for you. Once you understand each moon phase, weekday, and direction, you will intuitively know when to do your spell. When you live in tune with the moon cycles, your deep connection will naturally guide you as you feel and sense what is required, and when, to work your spells.

Focus on what you want and remember to not leave anything out. You need to be focused with positive words and actions. You already have the emotions within you to fuel the spell you wish to work with. Prepare yourself on the day before working with your spell. You may want to mediate first and ground and centre yourself by imagining roots growing from your feet into the ground. Once you are focused on your intent for your spell and have gathered your ingredients and tools, you should draw the rest of the energy from external sources such as the elements, deities, and powers of the weekdays, directions, and the moon. The energy should be built up slowly as you work on raising a cone of power for the spell. At this point, direct and release it, keeping focused on your intent for the spell to work. Next you need to set the scene, so to speak.

Creating Sacred Space to Cast Your Spell

Create a place that is safe, private, and away from prying eyes. Make sure you will not be interrupted. A small room or even a shed is a perfect place to create a magickal circle (see chapter two for details). If you have a garden, you might want to create a space to cast your spells under the moon. To purify your magickal space, use sage, mugwort, or herbs or incense of your choice. If you cannot burn anything in your space, you can procure sprays that have space-clearing properties.

It is important to determine the boundaries of your magick circle. To do this, you can either visualise a circle around you, sprinkle salt in a circle, or place a ring of candles around you physically or symbolically. A magick circle gives you protection and also contains the energy conjured and created within the circle itself. This magnifies and intensifies your ritual. Make sure all your tools and ingredients for the specific spell you want to

cast are within the circle before you start, plus any items to represent the elements, seasons, and directions you are working with, as per the list presented here:

- Earth—pot plant, rock, crystal, sage, bowl of earth, salt, brown candle
- Air—feather, bell, incense, yellow candle
- Fire-red candle, staff
- Water—sea shell, bowl of water, mirror, blue candle

Casting a Simple Finding Spell

Now we will look at casting a spell, specifically the finding spell as an example, within the sacred space you have just created. This spell is an aid to finding something that is lost to you. It could be an item of some sort or something more intangible like inspiration to write or create, the drive to see something through, or the will to stick to a healthy diet or take up exercise.

You will need:

- A candle (either black or brown) to represent earth
- · Sheet of paper and pen
- Somewhere to bury the paper outside

Light the candle and face the direction of north. Take a piece of paper and write upon it the name of that you are looking for. Hold the image of the item in your mind as you recite the following:

Direction of north, magick of earth,

honour me with your powers of birth.

There's something I'm missing and just cannot find;

I picture now within my clear mind.

To find and retrieve from the picture you see,

I ask it's returned for safe keeping to me.

Buried deep within your womb,

I ask of earth to open its tomb.

Release and free that which is mine

so I can reclaim it, all in good time.

As above, so below,

weave this spell and let it flow.

Guardians, gatekeepers, may you bestow

magickal ingredients charged, released, let go.

I work with your magick with harm to none,

so mote it be, and it is done.

Now blow out the candle, fold the piece of paper four ways and bury it in the earth if you are outside, or put it in a pocket to take outside as soon as you have finished the spell, and bury it. Your lost item will be returned in an unexpected and magickal way.

Now that you have completed the spell, close the circle by thanking the guardians and gatekeepers at each direction, starting with the west and working anticlockwise to finish with the north. Use your own words to close the circle, something like "Hail, farewell, thank you, for assisting me with my work." When you have finished, step out of the circle or visualise a doorway to step out of. Seal the spell, choose one of the four elements to suit the seal, depending on your magickal ingredient as listed below (on this occasion it would be "earth"):

- **Earth**—gather your ingredients and place them in a cloth bag or tin and then bury it in the earth. This way they are contained, together, grounded, and protected.
 - $\bullet \ \, \textbf{Fire} \text{burn your ingredients (if permitable)}$
 - Air—let the winds take any natural ingredients
 - Water—submerge into flowing water or a deep body of water

Another way to seal the spell is to again take all the ingredients, place them in a bag or container, and then use a wax seal on the tin, box, or cloth bag. You can then place it on your altar for the spell to be fused with the energy of your focused intent until your spell is fully manifested and give thanks.

I would now like to share my top four magickal herbs that I use in weaving spells for protection, allurement, healing, and prosperity. Remember that when working with spells, make them your own; that way you are adding your personal thoughts and connections with the herb not from someone's else's spells. It makes a big difference in spellcasting when it's yours. I am providing you with information about the herbs and how they have been used in both ancient times and in today's world; however, you should not take any of the following as medical advice. If you wish to use any of the herbs internally, please consult with your medical professionals. Also remember if using in cooking, be extremely careful and do not exceed normal food seasoning quantities.

Mugwort (Artemisia vulgaris)

This witches' herb weaves its magick throughout folklore and herbalism. It has been used since the early Iron Age as, then, farmers used it to bulk up their grain-based foods. It was spoken about and used throughout European folklore for protection against fatigue and poisons and was worn as a wreath on the body to keep evil spirits away. The native people rubbed mugwort leaves on the body at their ghost dances to protect them from ghosts. Many people used it as a substitute for tobacco. It was, and still is, used as poultice, incense, for smudging, and of course in spellwork. Mugwort is considered a sacred herb of Artemisia, the Greek goddess of the moon. You can also have it in teas and use it as an inhalation. I love to have a bath with mugwort if I am focused on divination or dreaming or if I wish to have visions.

Tips for Working with Mugwort

Create a mugwort wash by taking a handful of dried mugwort and adding it to a small pot of water (ideally stream or spring water), about a pint per 500 mls. Bring to the boil, then turn off and let cool. Once cooled, you can use it to wash down areas needed for spellwork. You can also use the wash for cleansing your crystals, stones, or other tools. Store in a large jar and keep in a dark place until needed. You can hang a bundle of mugwort over your bed to guide you when you are having out-of-body experiences and astral projection. Hang a wreath of mugwort over or beside your front door to ward off negative energy entering your home or house. Make sachets of mugwort of the dried leaves and hide them near doorways and also windows and in corners of your house to shift stagnant energy. Plant mugwort in your garden as it attracts nature spirits. Burn grounded mugwort on charcoal as a purifier. You can also make bundles of mugwort, like sage bundles, and use for saining. Cleanse ritual tools and crystals by steeping mugwort in hot, not boiling, water and cleansing tools in the steam. Fill a little gauze bag with mugwort and place under your pillow to add protection when dreaming. After using the mugwort for spells, any leftover branches can be used on fires. Weave mugwort into your broomstick and place at your front door for protection. Be careful if buying mugwort from online suppliers, as sometimes they pass off wormwood, which is very similar.

Mugwort Protection Spell

You will need:

- · Grounded mugwort
- · Grounded rock salt
- Mortar and pestle
- A black candle
- A besom (or broom) to sweep your doorway or your circle
- Mugwort wash
- · Mugwort bundle or charcoal in a fireproof dish
- · Hover or brush to clean up after you have finished
- Dish to seal the spell
- Paper and pen

Prepare your sacred space within your sacred room, kitchen, or outdoor ritual space. Make sure you will not be disturbed. Switch off your phone. First grind together your rock salt and mugwort in your mortar and pestle, then cleanse the space you are about to do your spellwork in with the mugwort; wash the floors and the tools. Now take your bundle of mugwort or the dried mugwort in a container and sain the area. Once done and you feel the spaced cleansed and clear of any negative energies, it's time to cast the circle. Place in the middle of your circle the black candle. Starting in the north, take the salt and mugwort mixture and create a circle around you.

Now stand in the middle of the circle. Facing north, light the black candle then place it in your right hand, with the bundle of mugwort in your left hand, and say:

Star of protection, a circle of mugwort and salt, surround and safeguard me from any default. Guard me from danger, gossip, and hurt from those who may curse me and dish out the dirt. I call upon the elements five, preserve my intentions so I can survive. Standing within, I lift up my arms, black candle, salt, and mugwort now banishes harm. Keep safe and defend my energy flow, as I raise my vibration, allow me to grow. Now out of danger, protection in place, magickal work now safe to embrace.

Now stand in the centre of the circle and visualise your personal energy field being energised and reinforced with protection. Once this is done, put out your black candle and, making a doorway out of the circle in the north

by using your besom, step carefully out of the circle, and say:

Gratefully, I accept the magick of you, of protection, to assist in all that I do. Lend me the courage, build power in me, assist my transcendence, so mote it be.

Once this is complete, sweep or pick up the salt and mugwort mixture and place into the tin to seal the spell. Write the spell on the paper and place in the tin with the mixture. Light your black candle again and seal the written spell and the mixture with the candle wax. Now, if possible, place the tin in the earth near your front door. If you don't have a garden in front of your door, then hide it inside and near your front door. With the remaining mixture left in the mortar and pestle, scatter at the front and back doors of your home and/or workplace. It's also good to place on windowsills as well. You can also put it in little gauze bags and put in your pockets, purses, and handbags.

Seaweed/Kelp (Laminaria digitate)

One of the first mentions of seaweed occurs in stories of early Greek priestesses whipping up the wind by whirling a strand of seaweed above their heads while singing to call on the undines for beguilement spells. It was known in the Isles of Scotland that if you offered a piece of seaweed on a full moon it would call forth the undines to do your bidding. It was known as the herb of the sea, and by placing it on ships, it would ensure safe passage and assistance from the water spirits. Braids of seaweed representing mermaids' braided hair was placed on the ships' bow again for safe passage. Seaweed has been used as a healing herb and for food for over twenty thousand years. If you want to predict the weather, hang a dried piece of seaweed over your doorway or porch or barn, ensuring that the seaweed is not in direct contact with the elements. If the seaweed becomes wet, it shows that a storm or heavy rains will come. If it goes very dry, it means a dry, hot period of weather is coming.

Tips for Working with Seaweed

Place a piece of dried seaweed into your suitcase before going on holidays on a plane or on a cruise to attract romantic interest on holiday. Keep it sealed in a small container to prevent everything from smelling of it when not in use. You can sleep with a sachet of seaweed in a bag under your pillow to dream of your true love. Place over your mirror in the bathroom to call on the undines to heighten your allurement abilities. Place in the garden soil as a fertiliser, then plant herbs for love such as calendula, basil, and chamomile to aid you in fertility and beguilement.

Seaweed Allurement Spell

You will need:

- A day off to go to the sea, ideally, but another natural body of water like a river, or lake, will also work
- \bullet A large handheld mirror
- A hairbrush
- A couple of handfuls of dried seaweed
- \bullet Three or four pictures of mermaids (drawn yourself or cut out from a magazine, etc.)
- A handful of shells from the sea

Pack a bag with all the items above and get yourself to a beach, lakeside, or riverside of your choosing. Find a place near the water's edge where you can sit without being disturbed. Take the contents out of your bag and begin by placing the mirror carefully in front of you. Surround the mirror with the seaweed. Next place the pictures of the mermaids and the shells around the mirror to complete this beautiful frame of your making. Now gaze into your magick mirror as you look at the seaweed, the pictures, and the shells; visualise yourself as a mermaid.

Now pick up your hair brush and brush your hair with purposeful strokes and say:

Magick mirror, help me see the truth of whom I long to be.
Unlock the siren from deep within me to reveal the mermaid and set me free.
Mermaids of allurement, bring me the one, invoking a love spell that can't be undone.
I ask of the mirror, please show me the ways, an image I see in the glass as I gaze.
I draw on the essence full into my heart, wishing for love that is way off the chart.
Mermaids of beguilement, I call upon you to fill me with magick in all that I do.

I see the beauty that oceans abound; it fills me with awe of the love I have found.

Continue to brush your hair as you visualise what you would like to bring about. You may wish to hum a simple tune as you do so; singing enhances the charm and strengthens it. Feel the siren within you stirring. Once you feel the spell is complete, take the shells and the seaweed and walk into the sea or lake so your feet are totally immersed (if you are by a river, you could just dangle your feet in). Feel your connection to the undines and your siren within. Let all your worries and fears sink to the bottom of the sea. As you do so, feel the magick of allurement within you. Now take the seaweed in your hands, tie three knots in it, and say:

By the power of three times three, by these three knots, so mote it be. My wish is done with harm to none; allurement and love, I bid you come. To receive my gifts so you may see my invocation. So mote it be.

Now throw the seaweed into the water along with your gifts. Stand and feel the rhythm of the sea surrounding you. As you leave the shores, pick up a stone (a white one if possible) and once you get home, place it on your dressing table or beside your mirror. This is to remind you of who you are. Anytime you need to enhance your spell, just pick up the stone and say the words of this spell, but starting with, "Enjoy the magick of allurement in all you do."

Yarrow (Achillea millefolium)

This magickal plant has been used for healing wound and burns and to reduce inflammation since ancient times. Its botanical name refers to Achilles the Greek, who was said to have used this herb to heal his warriors, claiming to have been taught how to do this by Chiron the centaur. The name means "sacred" and it was used in ancient temples in ritual magick. It's also known as "soldier's woundwort" because it has healed many on the battlefield. It is one of the world's oldest medicinal herbs, found in a Neanderthal burial site in the Middle East, dating back 60,000 BC, within an amulet used for protection and healing. Elspeth Reoch from Orkney was tried for witchcraft for using yarrow back in 1616. She claimed to have magickal healing and clairvoyant abilities and spoke with the fae. She also stated that she used yarrow while chanting to heal sick people. She was found guilty, was strangled, and then burnt.

Tips for Working with Yarrow

Making a yarrow tea is wonderful for reducing a fever. It's also great for insect repellent when rubbed on your skin if out in nature. If you have painful periods it helps to ease the pain. Also good for reducing high blood pressure. Makes wonderful tea—add honey and lemon. Great for curing colds and flu. Place a sprig of yarrow under your pillow on the night of the full moon to heal yourself. Wonderful as a tincture to heal piles. Use steeped leaves to apply to wounds and boils as a poultice. Also known to heal cramps when taking as a tea. Use sachets of yarrow to ward off illness. Wonderful when added to a bath as it protects you from hexes and negativity. Place yarrow flowers across your threshold for healing and protection. Carry as an amulet to banish illness and ward off psychic attack.

Yarrow Healing Spell

You will need:

- Bunches of yarrow with flowers on
- Cloth of green natural material cut into several strips
- A green table cloth
- · A green candle
- Paper and pen
- Picture of those who need healing, or items belonging to those who need healing
- Visit to a healing well or faery tree or well

Take time out to collect your yarrow from nature, freshly harvested. Then bring it back to your home. Now cut up your green cloth into strips for tying. Then create a living altar on your living room or kitchen table. Cover it with the green table cloth. Now place the green candle in the middle of the table. Now place the fresh bunches of yarrow across the table, spreading evenly. Once this is done, place the photos of those needing healing onto the table along with their personal items. Place the green strips of cloth, one beside each picture or item for each person. Now light your candle and focus your attention on those needing healing. Hold up, one by one, the photo or item of the person needing healing in your left hand and the green strip of material in your right hand and say:

Disorders to treat, ailments to cure, healing magickal poultices shall endure.

Sacred yarrow from ancient times, healed the wounds of battles' crimes.
Look deep within, sickness revealed, blessed with yarrow, healing sealed.
Magick to mend as the green candle burn, illness now leave, for health to return.

Next put the photo or item back on the table, then write the name on a piece of paper of who you are healing and attach with a green thread to the green strip of cloth. Then say the following:

Gratefully, I ask for healing to be sent to assist [name of person] with advice and consent, to open the doors for healing to take place, so that [name of person] receives this herb of grace with harm to none. So mote it be.

Pass the strip of cloth through the flame and place to one side. Now repeat for any other people you wish to send healing to, including yourself. Once finished, take the candle and drip wax on each piece of paper attached to the strip of cloth. When you are ready, take the green bag full of the spells and go to either a healing well, clootie well, or faery tree. When you arrive, tie each one individual onto the tree nearby. Once complete, say what feels right for you, maybe a healing sound or charm. If it is not possible to go to a well or faery tree, you can pass the illness into a hill, stone, or sea.

Peat Moss (Sphagnum)

In Scotland peat moss is also known as red moss. This moss is an algae. Wonderful as food thickeners or as a gelatine substitute. Winnie used to make teas from it to use as a digestive aid for her dad. I was always picking up this moss at the doors. As I child I thought it was bits of rubbish and would throw the moss away. Winnie could never understand why the moss always vanished. Then one day I saw her putting the moss under the door mat at the back door. "What are you doing?" I asked.

"I'm bringing customers to my doorstep to buy my goods. See that green bag hanging from the washing line? Well that's my money bag; it brings me good luck and a flow of money," was her reply.

I learned never to throw away anything I found because even the littlest things could bring magick and good luck into the house. Winnie would tell me the story of how in World War I they used moss to pack the wounds of the soldiers. Two Scottish men, one a surgeon and one a botanist, used the moss when they had exhausted supplies of all other materials. This ancient healing remedy saved the lives of many on the battlefield. It was first noted to have been used at the Battle of Clontarf in 1014 in Ireland. This amazing little moss has saved thousands of lives. Interestingly, the Germans were already using moss to staunch bleeding and heal wounds with a great saying: "It is right to be taught, even by the enemy."

Tips for Working with Peat Moss

I love adding moss to incenses as it gives that deep earthy smell when found on the land or, if from the sea, a connection with the sylphs. Placed in potpourri, it fills up spaces beautifully. Place in your pocket to carry it around with you for good luck. Put under your front or back door to your home or workplace to increase customers and a money flow. Buy a green flannel bag and place in the bag and hang from your windows or even your car. You can also place the moss in small little jars and tie a green ribbon around it for luck. Grow moss in a shady area of your garden where grass does not grow. I love working with a living, breathing spell that is continuous and growing. By feeding your spell with water, earth, air, and fire (the sun) you are in effect keeping your spell alive. When working with a money spell, you need to feed it continually. I have a money plant with different ribbons on it for money, health, and relationships.

Peat Moss Prosperity Spell

You will need:

- \bullet Handful of moss (any type) taken from your garden or from the moors or forests
- · Handful of earth or soil from your garden or a source you trust like a woodland or garden centre
- One terrarium, preferably with an opening to maintain the moss
- One large glass bowl with bottle top to tie a ribbon, with an opening on the side
- One four-leaf clover (if you can find one), otherwise regular clover will do
- One rock and a handful of pebbles
- A green ribbon
- Buttermilk
- One green candle
- Small note papers and green string
- · Coins and lucky charms of your choosing

Place your terrarium on your table along with your other items. Light a candle beside you. Now place in the bottom of the terrarium your small pebbles and stones. Then on top place either any old silver coins, penny pieces, or cents you have found (you know the saying, "See a penny, pick it up, all day you will have good luck"). Now you know what to do with that lucky coin you have found! Now take the pen and paper and write on the note what prosperity you wish in your life. Be mindful what you wish for. Once you have done this, tie with the green string, seal the string with the green candle wax, and place in the centre of the stones and coins and charms. Now cover with earth then place small rocks in to make a miniature rock garden.

Once this is done you can either transplant your moss around the terrarium or you can spread the moss around. To do this, put the moss, some buttermilk, and a cup of water into a blender and mix to a mossy slurry. Now pour over the rocks or in-between chunks of moss already transplanted. Ensure you feed and nurture the moss, keeping it moist as possible. You can at this point add either your regular clover to grow or your lucky four-leaf clover inside the terrarium. Once everything is in place, tie the green ribbon around the top of the terrarium or large glass container and seal the tie with wax.

Once you have finished, take a lucky coin in your left receiving hand and in your right hand hold the green candle, and say:

Fae of abundance, I ask for new peace; from poverty, debt, I wish for release. Please bring me prosperity and all that I need; adorn me with riches and the chance to succeed. In all that I do, I ask you to bless myself and my life with your vast treasure chest. For all that is good, I ask with a kiss, magickal leprechauns, grant me my wish. I work with magick with harm to none. So mote it be, there it is done.

Now bury the coin in the side of the terrarium so you can see the coin for prosperity and abundance to grow in your life. Remember to feed the terrarium with little affirmations and notes, water, and love. Have a wonderful time creating. Blessings.

It's time now to combine everything you have learned in this book and focus on what it is that you wish to become. What follows is your journey to reveal your calling. Though this is not to be taken lightly, it is an experience that should be enjoyed, not feared. You can either read through this invocation a few times to familiarize yourself with the process, and/or take this book with you as a guide. Note, the journey must take place in nature, somewhere where you will have direct contact with the elements, in particular, access to water (stream, lake, pond, river, or the sea) that will not allow you to be disturbed for a couple of hours. You may want to set some time aside to think of such a place, even to visit beforehand and ensure everything that you will need to do can be facilitated there safely.

Journey Invocation— Awakening the Witch Within

You will need:

- A suitable spot in nature
- Appropriate clothing and a blanket to sit or lie on
- A bottle of water
- Small towel (dry off hands and feet)
- Offerings (for the guardians of the threshold and for Mother Nature)

When you feel you are ready for this undertaking, prepare yourself to go outdoors for a couple of hours. If at all possible, leave your phone at home or switch it off for the duration of the invocation. The best time to do this is either at dawn, dusk, or midnight; however, if this is not possible, then choose a time that suits you and a moon phase that resonates with you too. Once you arrive, place some offerings at the threshold and ask permission to cross it. When permission has been given, go to your chosen spot and spread your blanket mindfully, being careful not disturb any creatures or plants. I always ask permission before placing the blanket on the ground too. This way any creatures, animals, or plants or trees hear my words. Once you are settled on your blanket, either lie down or sit upright in a comfortable position. Now observe: what surrounds you? How does Mother Nature speak to you? Do you hear the whispering winds calling to you? Now close your eyes and feel her, touch the earth, feel the winds, feel the sun on you, listen to the water. Imagine they are your closest friends. What are they saying to you? Take it all in.

Next it is time to connect with the ancestors. Call on them now to assist you in the work you are about to undertake. Place your hands on the earth and make a pledge and oath to take care of Mother Nature, to take from her only what is needed and ensure your gift back to her is entirely natural. Now stand up and feel the wind embrace you (it might be very windy or just the slightest breeze—just feel it in that moment). Pledge to yourself

to always listen to spirit and nature when they speak to you. Trust that what they say is always for your highest good.

Next raise your hands upward to the sun (or where the sun might be if cloudy or you are doing this at night). With eyes closed, thank the sun for life, for heat, for all the foods and herbs that you ingest. If you have gone out at night, thank the moon and the reflection of the sun upon her. Open your eyes and make your way to the water. Either sit with your feet in the water or, if you can, stand in the water. Connect with the flowing water, connect with your emotions and feelings, and let go of what no longer serves you. Now place water on your hands then on your third eye (middle of your forehead), asking for the visions to be shown to you.

Stepping out of the water, onto dry land, face north and with arms outstretched say:

The earth, the water, the fire, the air, return, return, return, return.

Repeat this facing each direction. Once back in the north direction, kneel down on your knees and once again touch the earth. Now is the time to make your invocation to nature, to yourself, to the spirits, the deities, the spirits in all things. Then to the elements, trees, stones, plants, herbs, animals, and all of nature. Let the words flow out naturally from your heart, your heartfelt feelings and thoughts. Give thanks for everything you have, for you are a child of Mother Nature and she loves you. Feel the spirit in all things and allow your wise knowing to return as you awaken. Remember that the witch lies within you. So mote it be.

Finding Your Teacher—The Journey Begins

When I started writing this book, I did not know where the journey would take me. Being dyslexic, the only way I have been able to learn is through oral traditions. I sat and prayed to my ancestors for help in writing this book. They have guided me, pushed me, shown me that within each and every one of us lives a wisdom keeper, one who has walked and lived their experiences so they can share with others.

It's not been an easy path, having to trust and completely surrender to the powers that be. I remember travelling all over the whole world looking for my teacher, only to find that my best teacher was within me. I learned how to be and how not to be from other people. My greatest teachers have been the sacred plant medicine teachers, nature, my drum, my staff, my seer's stone. We tend to think that the person we are looking for has all the answers. Many people give away their personal power to a teacher. That is not correct. Each and every person can be the high priest/priestess of their own lives and the teacher is there to support them and cultivate their inner witch, the wise one who lives within.

We have covered many different aspects in this book. Solid foundations are the building blocks of life. Know yourself first, then the rest naturally falls into place. Don't worry about the whys and wherefores. Place your trust in something much older, much deeper in time—yourself! The you without the supports, stripped of all fears and pains, is the you forged from the stars. So become the shining star within the stone, and to help and support you, look for someone that gives you a good feeling in your heart and fills you with excitement about the next part of the journey. Don't judge them on appearances; some of the best teachers I have met have been sitting on roadsides begging. Remember teachers come in many forms, shapes, and sizes. Look for someone who respects life and has a love of nature. Your teachers will respect the past, make the most of the present, and welcome the future in a positive manner.

Good teachers will own personal power and have a healthy relationship with the material world. Ask about their story—who taught them, what challenges they overcame, and what sacrifices they have made. Remember a good teacher will never ask you to do something they would not do themselves. And when you hear them speak of themselves and their ways, do they teach or preach? Are they good listeners, compassionate and empathetic? Do they try to change your belief systems or allow you to have free thought? A teacher's responsibility is not to interfere in the life path of one who comes into their lives. They can offer suggestions, show them many paths they can take, but ultimately, they cannot change the course of destiny for the seeker. It is your choice, your decision. Teachers have a duty of care in what and how they impart their wisdom, but they are not responsible for anyone but themselves, and that is the same for the seeker. Only by learning from our mistakes can we know the path to the source within. I have found that the greatest teachers of all are the ones who push your buttons, get you to react, to show you by reacting that you still have within you that which needs sorting and healing. When you stop reacting and focus on positive future outcomes, your journey will change course from one of recovery to one of infinite discovery.

Chapter Tips

Since the dawn of time, wise women and men have cast spells and charms on ancient lands for the good of the clans and tribes. Their beliefs and total trust in nature and the powerful forces of the supernatural and the gods have weaved an incredible legacy of witchcraft. You may now choose to take on this mantle; it may be that you are one of a line of witches, or you may be the first to walk this path. Either way you would be wise to consider the following:

- It's very important that before you start engaging with spellwork you get to grips with inner magick (your personal power, balancing emotions and intellect, and honing your intuition), before focusing on outer magick and casting.
- It's not about impressing your will onto universal energy as some witches believe happens. It's about you, knowing your craft, and merging your wisdom and personal power that you have learned, worked with, and contained in the knowledge of how the ancestors, spirits, elementals, and nature work. Once you apply this into your day-to-day life, everything changes.
- Always follow your "gut feeling" (intuition) first and foremost. If something doesn't feel right when casting spells, then don't do it! Have you ever done a spell that has not felt right or has backfired on you?
- Learn to create a cone of power; weave together your connection with the ancestors, elementals, deities, spirits of place, and all living things so that you have access to a storehouse of power that can hold and sustain both yourself and your community.
- By working with the mystical forces and cycles of nature in conjunction with ancient wisdom, knowing, and honour, you have the power to manifest a positive life of love, happiness, and prosperity for yourself and the world around you.
- With unwavering focus and intent, spellwork harnesses and manipulates energy and the magickal forces needed to bring about anything from healing and prosperity to walking toward one's destiny.
- Ancient wisdom and magick awaken within when one follows and works with the mystical phases of the moon. The moon is one of the most powerful forces when working with, spells and magick. It affects the tides, weather, animal behaviour, plants, and even our own moods and feelings. We too are ruled by the phases of the moon, particularly women who reflect the cycles during their "moon time."
- It's important to create your own unique way of spellcasting to find out what works best for you. Never use a spell to harm another, as it will come back to you. What you give out comes back to you!
- Have you looked all over the world for a teacher only to find your most significant teacher is within you? Teachers are there to support a person, to help them achieve the best they can be. A teacher's responsibility is not to interfere in the life path of another. They are your mirror helping you to walk the path of the wise.

You have a choice now to heal yourself, others, and this beautiful planet. You have been tasked with being a wise woman or wise man of the craft. Let nothing or no one ever get in your way. Until we meet again. Blessed Be.



Afterword

his rite of passage that you are following in this book is a labour of love crafted throughout the years. It's a bit like conducting an orchestra. Imagine you are the conductor. If you have no experience, how could you conduct the orchestra? What would happen would be chaos. If you don't have a personal connection with both the musicians and the instruments (elements and elementals), how could you direct or create a magickal experience? When you apply that principle to all the aspects we have talked about in the book, you have a sacred marriage aligned with the symphony of life. Having walked this path for over forty-five years, I've seen big changes in the whys and wherefores of our work. It's important that you follow your heart, your beliefs, and your passions. As an eclectic witch, I weave what I have learned from Scottish folk magick, witchcraft, shamanism, and other belief systems. It feels right for me. I work with and honour the ancestors, the fae, the spirit in all things, and the different gods and goddesses pertaining to the land I walk upon. They are the wisdom keepers, the guardians, and gatekeepers of our beautiful planet.

Today, as I finish this book on a full moon in September, I reflect on the lived experiences I have had being with Swein, Dad, Winnie, Grandmother Meiklejohn, and many others who shared with me their stories, knowledge, and wisdom of the craft. If it had not been for them, I would not have been able to write this book.

I recall meeting Flavia for the first time. She did not know who I was or what I did, but she had a message to give me. She said, "The ancestors want you to know that it is important to share your wisdoms about the work you do. You will write many books, but one will stand out. It will be about your life's work, your heritage. They encourage you to share with those who would listen. By writing this book, you are carrying on the lineage line of those who have gone before you."

As I stood there and listened to her, I saw Swein and many others standing together, smiling. Swein spoke to me, "She's right, lass, you are now the Highland Seer. Carry on the good work that you do and help others." Today I am blessed to work with Flavia. She has encouraged me, supported me every step of the way, as I have battled through my dyslexia. She has shown me how to write the words of my heart as words that flow on paper. I am deeply honoured and blessed to be able to share what I have learned orally during my sixty-two years of life. I am proud to say I'm Scottish and speak of my lineage line, because by doing so, I am honouring my ancestors. Working with Scottish witchcraft is about developing a deep understanding of who you are and the wisdom that you can draw from. Never doubt yourself!

Be true, be free, and like William Wallace, sit on your spirit horse and shout "Freedom!" for all to hear. Let us join together as one clan, one people, who are proud to stand up and say, "We are witches; we follow the Old Ways and honour our tradition, our craft, our way of life."

So mote it be.



Pronunciation Key

Celtic names can frustrate individuals who are not familiar with their pronunciation. In general, "ch" is pronounced as a hard k, "si" as "shee," "dh" as a v, "u" as "oo" (as in "zoo"), and "a" as "aw" (as in "paw").

Annwn (AN-noon)
AosSidhe (Ay-os-shee)
Buidseachan (Boo-ed-sick-ee-en)
Cailleach (ky-lee-ACK)
Pech (pek)
Sith (shee)
Tuatha Dé Danann (TOO-ah-thah-day DAHN-ahn)

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A big thank you to all who gave this book such amazing endorsements. Thanks for taking time out of your busy lives to read my work.

To all my family and friends, past and present. Thanks for all your love and support throughout my life.

Body, Mind & Spirit / Scottish Spirituality

"Deeply personal and immersed in myth and folklore, Barbara Meiklejohn-Free's book draws from the old and the new in a manner that will resonate with the modern witch today. She shares the pages of nature's book from her homeland with us. Scottish Witchcraft makes me long to visit this land and seek its magick."

-Christopher Penczak, author of The Inner Temple of Witchcraft



Hear the Call of the Highlands for Powerful Magick, Healing & Divination

Take a journey through the magickal folk traditions of Scotland. Barbara Meiklejohn-Free, a Scottish hereditary witch, shares her own spiritual awakening into the craft and shows you how to integrate these practices into your own life. Discover the secrets of divination, scrying, faery magick, and communication with ancestors. Explore herb and plant lore and specific rituals to address what you most desire. Filled with inspiring anecdotes, craft history, and step-by-step instructions, this book will help you begin a new chapter of spiritual discovery.

BARBARA MEIKLEJOHN-FREE was born and raised in the Highlands of Scotland. She is an author, singer, drummer, flautist, and storyteller—all of which she employs in weaving together the ancient craft of the shaman, seer, and mystic. Just before the passing of her spiritual mentor, Barbara was bestowed the honorific title of Highland Seer. Barbara lives in Derbyshire, England. Visit her online at www.BarbaraMeiklejohnFree.com.



"Scottish Witchcraft draws on the history, myth, and folklore of Scotland and incorporates them into craft practice, with exercises, rituals, tips, and advice to help the reader explore their own path."

-Anna Franklin, author of The Hearth Witch's Compendium

